

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
Eglin Air Force Base, Florida

FINAL
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

CONSTRUCT RANGE ROAD 218
BYPASS ROAD AT TA D-51
EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA



FEBRUARY 2006

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

FOR

Construction of Range Road (RR) 218 Bypass Road at Test Area (TA) D-51, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida

RCS 04-889

This finding and the analysis upon which it is based was prepared pursuant to the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its implementing regulations as promulgated at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500 (40 CFR 1500-1508) plus:

- US Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process as promulgated at 32 CFR Part 989

The Department of the Air Force has conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the potential environmental consequences associated with the Construction of a Bypass Road for RR 218 at TA D-51, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. The February 2006 EA is hereby incorporated by reference into this finding.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is to construct a paved, two-lane bypass road along the northern boundary fence line of TA D-51. The typical range road width is approximately 20 feet with a cleared shoulder edge of approximately 24 feet to a forested tree line. The bypass road would likely be constructed to this general specification. The anticipated path of the bypass would be parallel to the northern boundary fence line. The bypass road would intersect with RR 218 outside of the security gate areas for TA D-51 and would be approximately 2.3 miles long. Photographs of the project area are included in Appendix A of the EA. The roadway path would be parallel to the existing fence line for the entire length of the northern TA D-51 boundary. The exact fence and roadway location would need to be established based on a specific site survey. The project would involve tree removal and soil disturbances.

Alternative Action A (Preferred Alternative)

Alternative Action A, which is also the Preferred Alternative, consists of a paved, two-lane bypass road along the northern edge of TA D-51 and it would be constructed similar to the Proposed Action. The difference would be that the road would jog approximately 200 feet toward the existing RR 218. This jog would occur in the vicinity of the Smith Branch Steephead and would jog away from the steephead for a linear distance of approximately 1,000 feet. The existing northern boundary fence line in this vicinity would likewise mimic this roadway offset jog. This offset jog of the bypass road is necessary to accommodate a requirement for a 300-foot endangered species habitat buffer from the Smith Branch Steephead. Roadway width and shoulder general specifications would be expected to be the same as the Proposed Action.

Alternative Action B

Alternative Action B is an alternate route bypassing TA D-51 to TA C-52 which could be utilized by personnel. This alternate route would involve traveling State Highway 285 and RRs 200 and 219. Major portions of RR 219 are unpaved compacted clay. No new construction would occur under this Alternative so land clearing operations would not be needed.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, traffic would continue to cross TA D-51, utilizing RR 218. The traffic flow would continue to be encumbered by the need to pass through the Naval Explosive Ordnance Disposal School security gates at TA D-51. Additional personnel would be needed to screen traffic. No new construction or land clearing would occur.

Summary of Environmental Impacts

A detailed discussion of issues analyzed and management strategies used to reduce potential impacts is given in the Construct RR 218 Bypass Road at TA D-51, Eglin Air Force Base EA, Chapter 4: Environmental Consequences and Chapter 5: Plans, Permits, and Management Actions.

Unexploded Ordnance (UXO): TA D-51 is within a known "probable" UXO contaminated area; therefore certain remediation provisions apply. DoD owns this land and no outgrant or conveyance to any public or private entity is being considered. A Construction Support Explosives Safety Submission Plan must be prepared and coordinated through AAC/SEOW prior to project initiation.

Soils: The Alternative Action A (Preferred Alternative), the Alternative Action B and the No Action Alternative would create no adverse impacts to soils. Potential adverse impacts would likely occur under the Proposed Action due to soil type and 12-30 percent slopes in proximity of the steephead. Implementation of Best Management Practices would minimize overall impact to soils.

Water Quality: The Alternative Action A (Preferred Alternative), the Alternative Action B and the No Action Alternative would create no adverse impacts to water quality. However, potential impacts to water quality would likely occur under the Proposed Action due to soil disturbance in close proximity to the Smith Branch Steephead area and water body. In order to maintain compliance with EO 11990, Protection of Wetlands, the Air Force would need to complete a Finding of No Practicable Alternative to address potential impacts to wetlands. Since practicable alternatives exist, a Finding of No Practicable Alternative to avoid wetlands is not likely to occur.

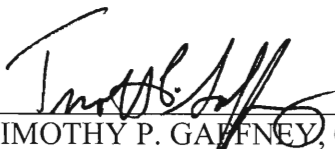
Biological Resources: The Alternative Action A (Preferred Alternative), the Alternative Action B, and the No Action Alternative would create no adverse impacts to biological resources. The Proposed Action would potentially impact habitat of the federally endangered Okaloosa Darter. Therefore, an Endangered Species Act, Section 7 consultation would be required under the Proposed Action since the project would occur within the United States Fish and Wildlife Service recommended 300-foot species habitat buffer from the Smith Branch Steephead.

Transportation: Finally, positive impacts to transportation would occur under the Proposed Action or Preferred Alternative by creating unimpeded traffic flow around TA D-51. A longer commute time would occur under Alternative Action B, and the No Action Alternative.

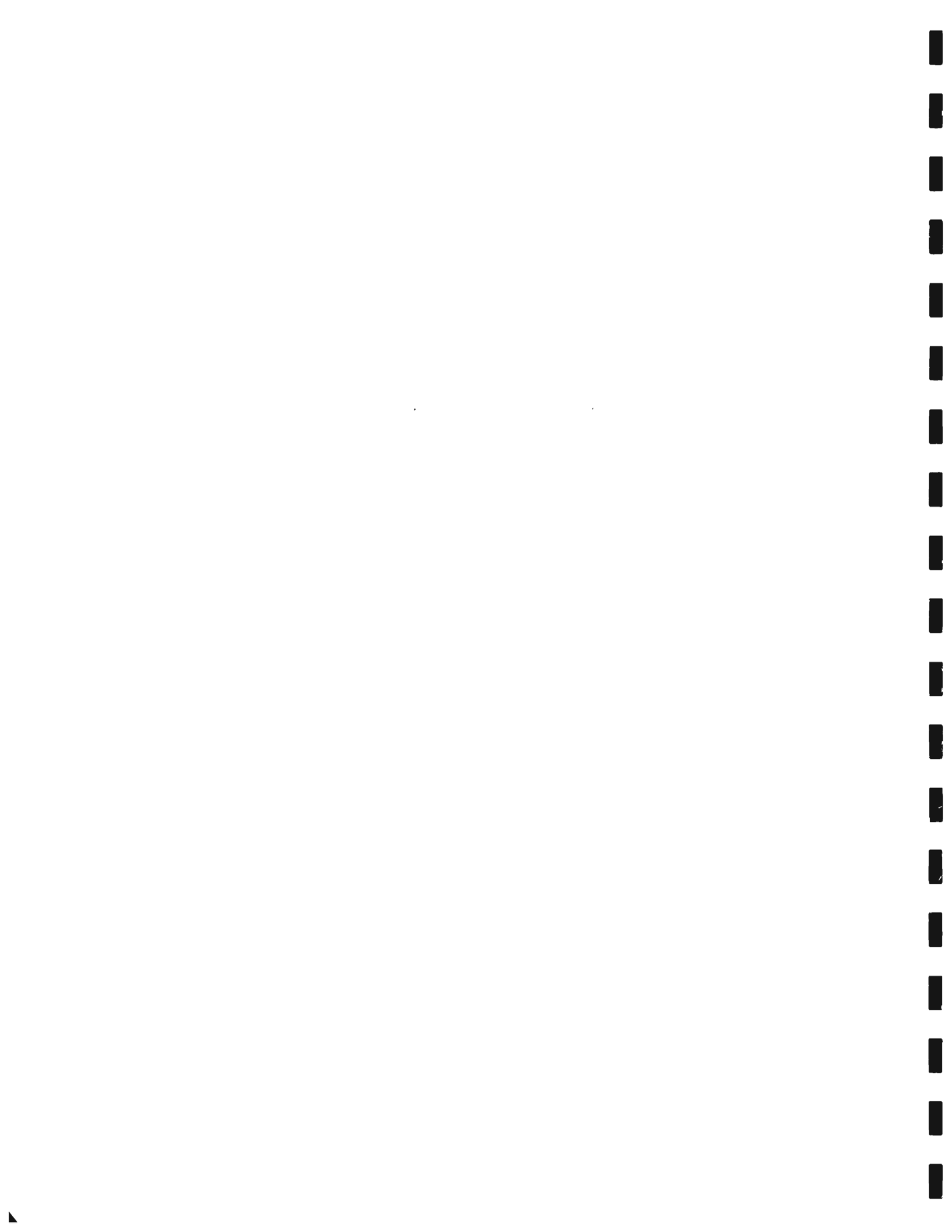
Cumulative Impacts: The Navy Explosive Ordnance Detachment (EOD) School plans to construct a new 5,000 square foot training facility at TA D-51. This project would include an outside EOD practical training area which would be located within a large area already approved and being used as an EOD practical training area. This would be accomplished in the reasonably foreseeable future, and it would be an action separate and apart from the bypass road. Cumulative impacts to soils and water quality resulting from the training facility and the bypass road would be negligible since the training facility construction project would take place within the boundaries of TA D-51. In addition, it is expected that no cumulative impacts to ecological associations would occur since the area potentially impacted by the EOD training facility construction project is not within the same ecological association as the Proposed Action. No cumulative impacts on transportation would be expected, since personnel at TA D-51 would not need the bypass road.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on my review of the facts and the environmental analysis contained in the attached EA and as summarized above, I find the proposed decision of the Air Force to allow the Preferred Action (Alternative Action A) to Construct Range Road 218 Bypass Road at TA D-51, Eglin AFB, Florida, will not have a significant impact on the human or natural environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This analysis fulfills the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the President's Council on Environmental Quality and 32 CFR Part 989.


TIMOTHY P. GAFFNEY, Colonel, USAF
Commander, 96th Civil Engineer Group

14 Mar 06
Date



FINAL
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

CONSTRUCT RANGE ROAD 218
BYPASS ROAD AT TA D-51
EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA

Submitted to:

96 CEG/CEV
96th Civil Engineer Group
Environmental Management Division
Eglin Air Force Base, Florida 32542

February 2006



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LIST OF ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND SYMBOLS

96 CEG/CEVCE	96 th Civil Engineer Group/Environmental Engineering Section
96 CEG/CEVH	96 th Civil Engineer Group/Cultural Resources Branch
96 CEG/CEVSN	96 th Civil Engineer Group/Natural Resources Section
96 CEG/CEVSP	96 th Civil Engineer Group/Environmental Analysis Section
AAC/SEOW	Air Armament Center/Weapons Safety
AF	Air Force
AFB	Air Force Base
BMP	Best Management Practice
CE-EOD	Civil Engineering-Explosive Ordnance Disposal
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CWA	Clean Water Act
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
DDESB	Department of Defense Explosives Safety Board
DoD	Department of Defense
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIAP	Environmental Impact Analysis Process
EO	Executive Order
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
ESS	Explosives Safety Submission
FAC	Florida Administrative Code
FDEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
GIS	Geographic Information System
IAW	In Accordance With
INRMP	Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan
MCCO	Motor Carrier Compliance Office
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
PSD	Prevention of Significant Deterioration
RC3	Range Configuration Control Committee
RR	Range Road
STD	Standard
TA	Test Area
U.S.	United States
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USC	United States Code
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance

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1. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

1.1 PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is to construct a paved, two-lane bypass road along the northern boundary fence line of Test Area (TA) D-51 (Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal [EOD] School) at Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) (Figures 1-1 and 1-2). The bypass road would intersect Range Road (RR) 218 on either side of TA D-51 and would be approximately 2.3 miles in length. The bypass would be outside the security gates for TA D-51.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) describes the potential environmental impacts that would result from these activities. The 46th Operations Group is the proponent of the action.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The U.S. Naval School EOD, located at TA D-51 on Eglin AFB, trains officers and enlisted members of the U.S. Joint Service, international military students, and civilians in methods for location, identification, evaluation, recovery, rendering safe and disposal of ordnance. Mission activities involving live munitions take place at various locations throughout the range. The presence of munitions at the test area is a security concern for the Navy. As a result, the Navy installed security gates at the TA D-51 boundaries on RR 218 and intends to screen traffic that enters the TA D-51 area. Additional personnel are necessary to screen traffic (Jackson, 2005).

Eglin's Test Wing personnel and contractors use Range Road 218 for access to TA C-52 (Figure 1-2). In addition to the five permanent staff assigned to TA C-52, additional personnel require access to the area to support various test programs. Recreation area patrons also use RR 218.

1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide unimpeded vehicular traffic flow around TA D-51. The existing security gates at TA D-51, when manned, result in interrupted traffic flow along RR 218. Travel time delays to TA C-52 and recreation areas result from these security checkpoints. Emergency support personnel, as well as test area crews, must be able to reach TA C-52 in a safe and timely manner. An alternate transportation route would provide unimpeded access to TA C-52 and recreation areas.

1.4 RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS

The Environmental Assessment for Construction of a Navy EOD School Training Facility at TA D-51 is concurrent with this effort.

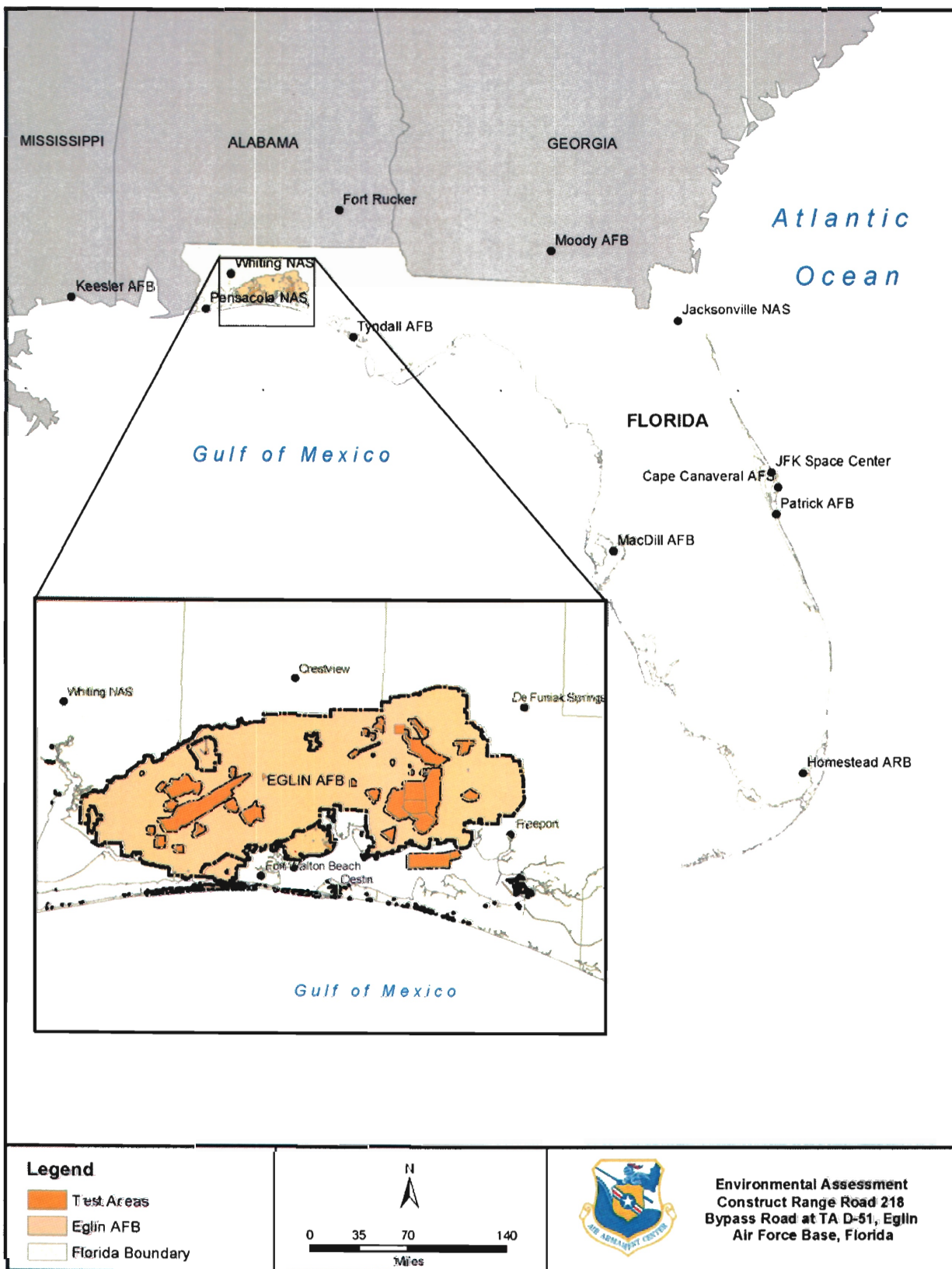


Figure 1-1. Location of Eglin AFB

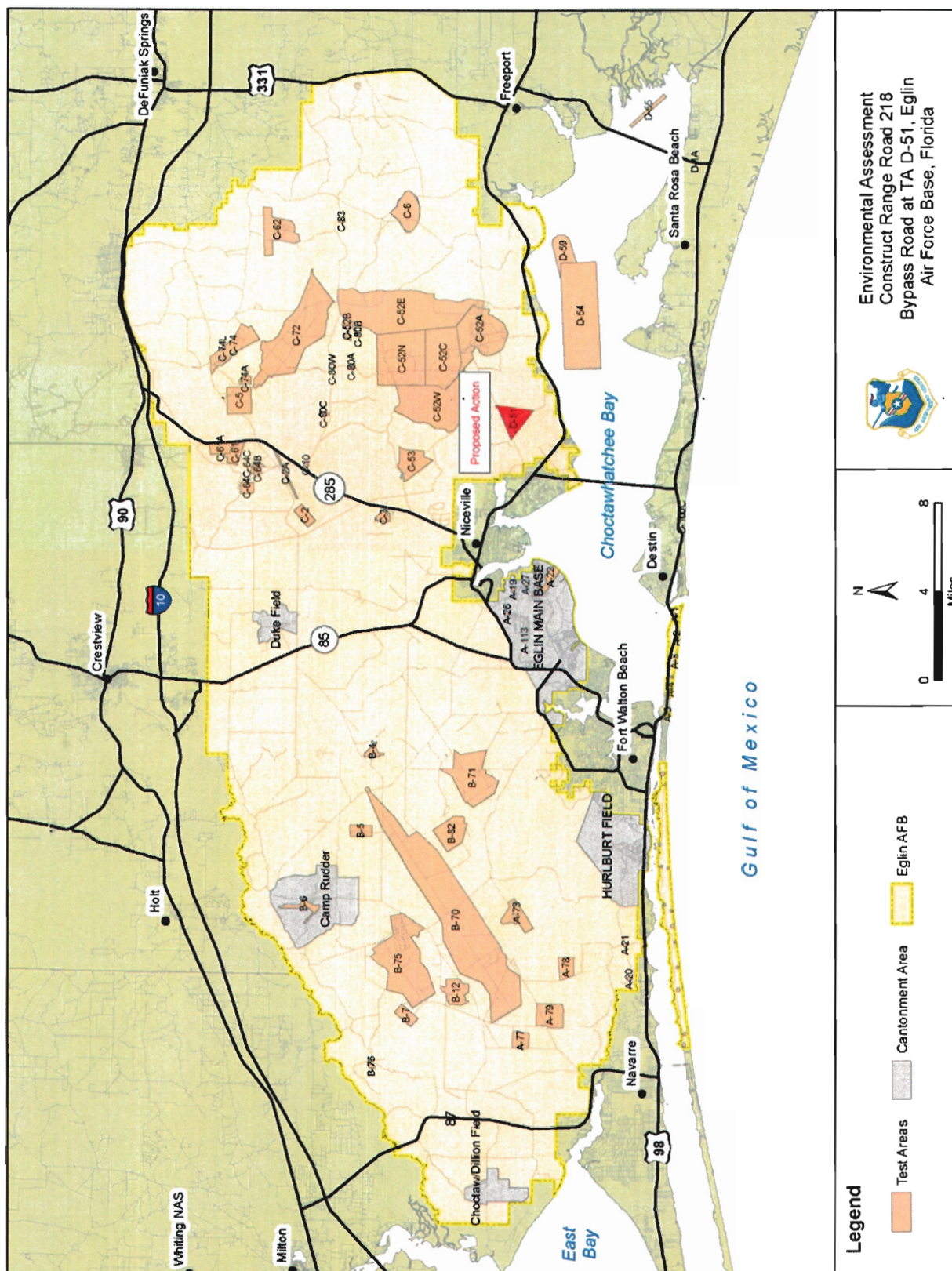


Figure 1-2. Location of TA D-51

1.5 SCOPE

This document was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations of 1978, 32 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 989, and Air Force Instruction 32-7061, Environmental Impact Analysis Process. To initiate the environmental analysis, the 46th Operations Group submitted an Air Force (AF) Form 813, Request for Environmental Impact Analysis, to the Environmental Management Division, Stewardship Branch, Environmental Analysis Section (96 CEG/CEVSP). A review of the AF Form 813 by CEVSP determined that the Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP) Working Group should address the Proposed Action.

1.5.1 Issues Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Based on the scope of the Proposed Action, the Alternative Actions A and B, and the No Action Alternative, as well as a preliminary analysis, the following issues are eliminated from further analysis.

Air Quality

Based on Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Permit No. 0910031-009-AV, Eglin is a named source under the New Source Review Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) Program. Evaluation of fugitive road-dust emissions associated with certain activities is part of the PSD applicability process; however, mobile sources as well as those associated with construction activities are not part of the PSD applicability process.

In addition to PSD applicability, Permit No. 0910031-009-AV includes facility-wide conditions that limit Eglin test range activities to 20 percent opacity at the boundaries of the Eglin reservation. Since the activities associated with the Proposed Action are short-term in duration, opacity levels should not exceed the 20 percent limitation at the boundary of the Eglin Range.

Environmental Restoration Program/Area of Concern Sites

No active Environmental Restoration Program sites are located within the vicinity of the proposed project. The preliminary analysis identified two unexploded ordnance (UXO) burial pits near the western end of TA D-51; however, the pit areas are approximately 1,000 feet away, and therefore no impacts are expected.

Environmental Justice and Risks to Children

Executive Order (EO) 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires federal agencies to identify and address actions that may disproportionately impact low-income or minority communities. The proposed activities would take place on Eglin AFB, and thus no potential impacts to the public, including low-income or minority populations, are expected.

EO 13045, Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks, requires federal agencies to address actions that may present environmental and safety risks to children.

Specifically, the EO requires identification of high populations of children (e.g., schools, childcare facilities, family housing). The proposed activities would take place on Eglin AFB at a test area where children are not present, and thus no potential impacts to children are expected.

Cultural Resources

If any work not included as part of the Proposed Action or Alternative put forward in this EA is required in the future, such plans must be coordinated with Eglin's Cultural Resources Branch (96 CEG/CEVH) office prior to their approval and implementation. All ground-disturbing activities at Eglin must be subject to prior consultation with and approval by 96 CEG/CEVH, which oversees and maintains records on all cultural resource activities on the base. Additionally, upon inadvertent discovery of any archeological material during the course of construction, all actions in the immediate vicinity would cease and efforts taken to prevent the find from further impact.

Nonhazardous Materials/Solid Waste

Roadway construction would potentially generate solid waste. These wastes would be disposed of in accordance with the FDEP, Florida Administrative Code (FAC) 62-701, Florida State Solid Waste Regulations and Eglin's Air Armament Center Solid Waste Management Plan 32-7. The waste would be primarily disposed of as construction/demolition debris, with modest amounts chipped on-site and used for erosion control. Due to the site location's proximity to potential UXO, no debris can be taken off range and/or given up for public use unless certified nonhazardous by authorized Eglin EOD personnel. Portions of the proposed path are already clear; therefore, additional clearing would be minimal and would not generate significant amounts of solid waste. As a result, no further analysis is necessary.

UXO

The Eglin land area at TA D-51 is within a known "probable" UXO contaminated area (Figure 1-3); therefore, certain UXO remediation provisions apply. These provisions are outlined in Department of Defense (DoD) 6055.9 Standard (STD), DoD Ammunition and Explosives Safety Standards, Chapter 12, Real Property Known or Suspected to Contain Munitions and Explosives of Concern or Chemical Warfare Material in Other-Than-Munition Configurations.

DoD owns the land area being considered for the RR 218 bypass road and is not conveying or out granting it to any public or private entity. It is being retained by the DoD. However, based on previous findings, the probability of finding UXO contamination is moderate to high. Since this probability exists, a Construction Support Explosives Safety Submission (ESS) Plan must be prepared and submitted to the Department of Defense Explosive Safety Board (DDESB) for final approval (in accordance with [IAW] C12.5.8). The Construction Support ESS Plan must be coordinated through Eglin's Weapons Safety (AAC/SEOW). This EA does not address potential impacts related to UXO; however, the detailed ESS Plan must be complete prior to project approval.

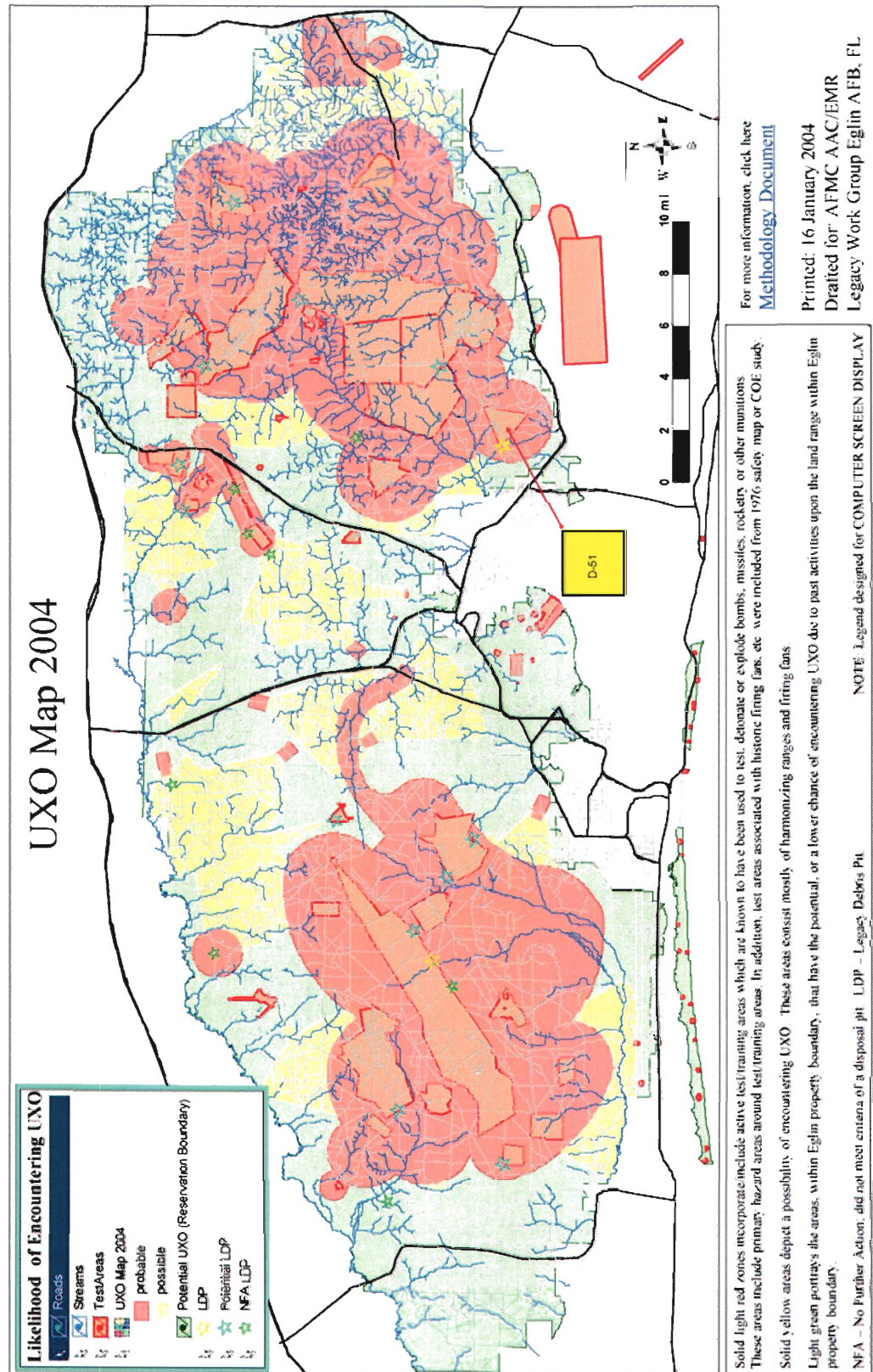


Figure 1-3. UXO Areas on the Eglin Reservation
Source: McKern, 2005

Socioeconomic

Socioeconomics addresses potential impacts to the local economy. The local economy would experience a temporary positive impact during the implementation of the Proposed Action, because it would provide jobs in that industry. No negative impacts on housing, employment, or base and county services are expected.

1.5.2 Issues Studied in Detail

Preliminary analysis based on the scope of the Proposed Action identified the following potential environmental issues warranting additional detailed analysis.

Transportation

Implementation of the Proposed or Alternative Actions would alter transportation routes. Analysis focuses on potential changes in explosive transport routes, travel times, emergency response capabilities, and impacts to transportation for recreation.

Soils/Erosion

Construction activities may contribute to the erosion potential of soils in the project area. This EA identifies erosion-prone soils within the project area, as well as potential impacts and best management practices (BMPs) for minimizing potential erosion impacts.

Biological Resources

The biological environment is composed of living resources (i.e., plants and wildlife) and the sensitive habitats that support them (e.g., wetlands, special natural areas and preserves, floodplains). Eglin uses a classification system based on ecological associations developed from floral, faunal, and geophysical characteristics. This EA identifies relevant ecological associations, habitat buffer zones, and regulatory requirements for sensitive species within the ecological associations.

Water Quality and Wetlands

The clearing of land and increase in impervious surfaces under the area of the Proposed Action creates the potential for an increase in the volume of stormwater runoff. This EA addresses management requirements, including permitting and stormwater controls, as well as BMPs.

1.6 APPLICABLE REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS AND COORDINATION

Inadvertent discovery of any cultural artifacts during construction and land clearing activities would require coordination with 96 CEG/CEVH.

During ground-disturbing and construction activities, reasonable precautions would control dust emissions and unconfined particulate matter to reduce impacts to air quality.

The Proposed Action would involve disturbing more than one acre of soil, and therefore a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit, FAC 62-621.300(4) would be required. Coordination with Eglin's Environmental Engineering Section (96 CEG/CEVCE) would be required to obtain stormwater permits. As part of the permit, a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan would be required and would include identification of appropriate controls, BMPs, and measures to minimize the stormwater impact.

In addition to the NPDES permit, a construction permit under the State Stormwater Rule, FAC 62-25 would also be required for the Proposed Action.

Eglin's Natural Resources Section, 96 CEG/CEVSN, has prepared a Coastal Zone Consistency Determination in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act. Appendix B details the Consistency Determination.

As mentioned in Section 1.5.1, DoD 6055.9 STD, Chapter 12 (C12.5.8), requires preparation and submittal of a Construction Support ESS Plan to DDESB for final approval prior to project commencement. The Construction Support ESS Plan must be coordinated through Eglin's Weapons Safety (AAC/SEOW).

Coordination on this project has occurred with the Range Configuration Control Committee (RC3). On 8 June 2004, the Base Community Planner and the 96 Security Forces Squadron representative briefed the RC3 on new security requirements for the EOD School that included a security fence with gate shacks and guards. The RC3 requested additional information on this item be presented at the next regular meeting.

At the subsequent RC3 Session on 11 August 2004, the EOD School presented a briefing on the checkpoint issue and the actions to date, as well as options to resolve the RR 218 issue. Action Status was "closed." The EOD School provided options including construction of a "hunter" route bypass around the outside perimeter of the fence. This option would include submission of an AF 813, that would involve safety and legal as well as environmental impact. The RC3 requested that EOD School return to provide the status of meeting this new requirement for the longer term approach of a bypass road.

1.7 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This EA follows the organization established by CEQ regulations (40 CFR, Parts 1500-1508). This document consists of the following chapters.

- Chapter 1, Purpose and Need for Action
- Chapter 2, Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives
- Chapter 3, Affected Environment
- Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences
- Chapter 5, Plans, Permits, and Management Requirements

- Chapter 6, List of Preparers
- Chapter 7, List of Contacts
- Chapter 8, References and Applicable Documents
- Appendix A, Photos of Existing Area Surrounding TA D-51
- Appendix B, Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) Consistency Determination
- Appendix C, State of Florida Clearinghouse Comments

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2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

This chapter describes the Proposed Action, the two Alternative Actions, and the No Action Alternative, summarizing the activities and issues associated with each.

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is to construct a paved, two-lane bypass road along the northern boundary fence line of TA D-51. The typical range road width is approximately 20 feet with a cleared shoulder edge of approximately 24 feet to a forested tree line. The bypass road would likely be constructed to this general specification. The anticipated path of the bypass would parallel the northern boundary fence line. As indicated in Figure 2-1, the bypass road would intersect with RR 218 outside of the security gate areas for TA D-51 and would be approximately 2.3 miles long. Photographs of the project area are included in Appendix A. The exact fence and roadway location would need to be established based on a specific site survey. The project would involve tree removal and soil disturbances.

2.2 ALTERNATIVE ACTION A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

Alternative Action A, which is also the Preferred Alternative, consists of a paved, two-lane bypass road along the northern edge of TA D-51, and it would be constructed similar to the Proposed Action. The difference would be that the road would jog approximately 200 feet toward the existing RR 218. This jog would occur in the vicinity of the Smith Branch Steephead and would jog away from the steephead for a linear distance of approximately 1,000 feet. The existing northern boundary fence line in this vicinity would likewise mimic this roadway offset jog. This offset jog of the bypass road is necessary to accommodate a requirement for a 300-foot endangered species habitat buffer from the Smith Branch Steephead (Figure 2-2). Roadway width and shoulder general specifications would be expected to be the same as the Proposed Action.

2.3 ALTERNATIVE ACTION B

Under this alternative, personnel would utilize an alternate route to TA C-52. The alternate route would involve traveling State Highway 285 and RRs 200 and 219 (Figures 2-1 and 2-2). No new construction would occur under this Alternative, so land clearing operations are not needed. Closure of the portion of RR 218 between TA D-51 and TA C-52 would not occur because it would significantly impact the ability of emergency responders to reach C-52 in a timely manner (Brown, 2005).

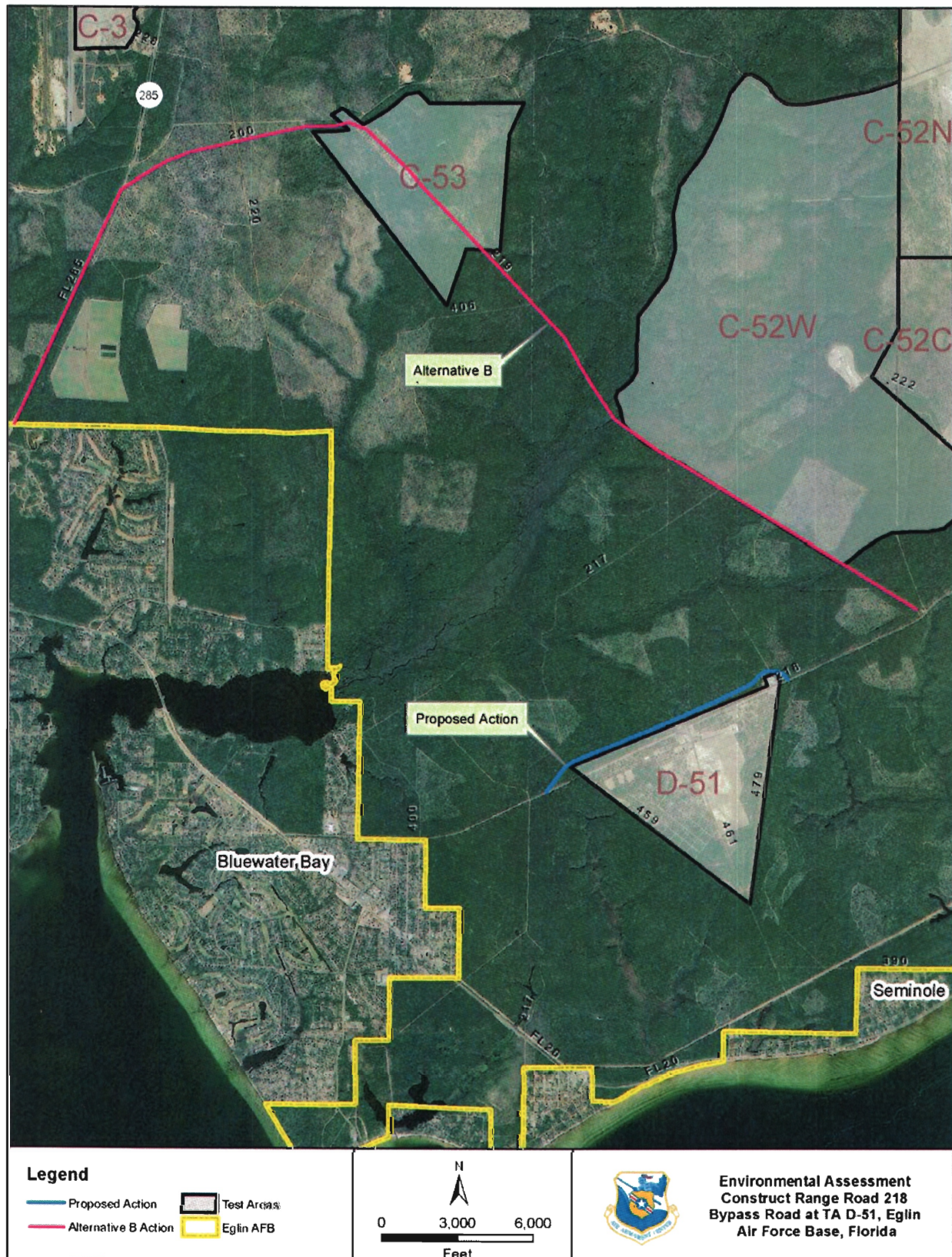


Figure 2-1. Proposed Action

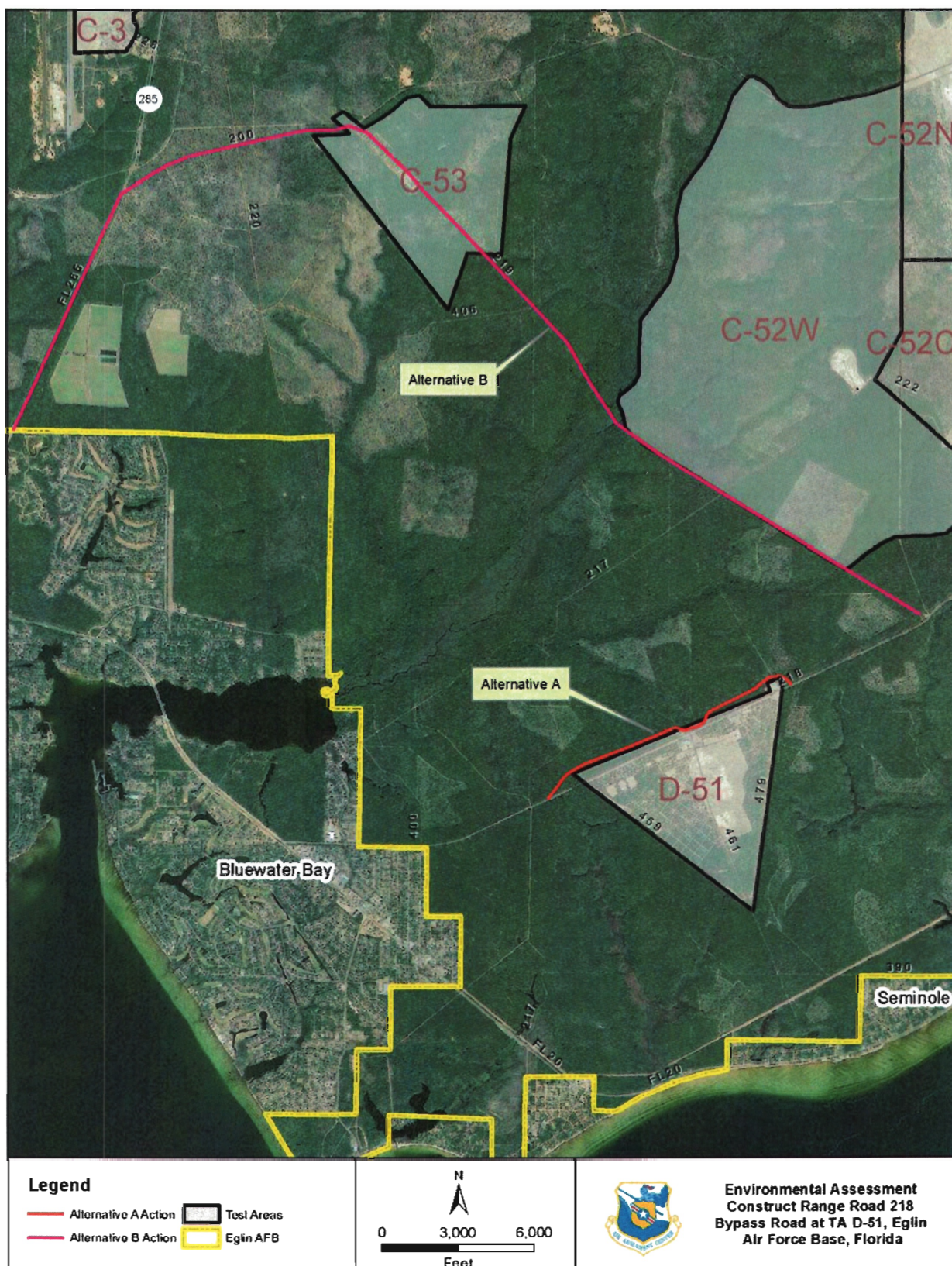


Figure 2-2. Alternative Actions

2.4 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative traffic would continue to cross TA D-51, utilizing RR 218. The traffic flow would be encumbered by the need to pass through the TA boundary security gates. Additional personnel are needed to screen traffic. No new construction or land clearing would occur.

2.5 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD

Two alternate transportation routes were considered but not carried forward.

- 1) State Highway 20 and RR 214
- 2) State Highway 20 and RR 212

These alternative routes created an estimated 13.5- and 15.8-mile commuting distance respectively. Since the current commuting distance is estimated at 10.5 miles, the additional distance when combined with lower roadway speed limits was determined to be beyond an acceptable length and, therefore, the routes were eliminated from further consideration.

2.6 ALTERNATIVES COMPARISON

Table 2-1 summarizes the impacts associated with the Proposed Action and Alternatives. Detailed descriptions of these impacts are in Chapter 4.

Table 2-1. Comparison of Alternatives

	PROPOSED ACTION	ALTERNATIVE ACTION A (PREFERRED ACTION)	ALTERNATIVE ACTION B	NO ACTION
Soils	Adverse impacts to soils would likely occur due to road construction in close proximity to the steephead area with slopes within the 12 to 30% range.	Implementation of BMPs and recommendations would reduce impacts to soils. The Proposed Action would not accelerate soil erosion. No adverse impacts to soils are anticipated.	No impact.	No impact.
Water Quality and Wetlands	Adverse impacts to water quality would be likely due to close proximity to steephead area. In addition, the Air Force would not be compliance with EO 11990, as practicable alternatives exist to avoid wetlands for the proposed project.	Implementation of BMPs and recommendations would reduce impacts to water. The Proposed Action would not adversely impact water quality or wetlands.	No impact.	No impact.
Biological Resources	An ESA Section 7 consultation would be required due to violation of the USFWS-recommended 300-foot species habitat buffer.	Land clearing would alter approximately 18 acres of Sandhill association. A 300-foot buffer to Okaloosa darter habitat would occur.	No impact.	No impact.
Transportation	Typical commuting distance of 10.5 miles. No time delays resulting from security check points. Positive impact on transportation flow.	Same as for the Proposed Action.	Typical commuting distance of 8.85 miles; however, longer commuting time would occur. RR 219 is unimproved and would potentially increase erosion potential along the roadway and require additional maintenance. No significant impact to transportation.	Impeded traffic flow from security check points.

ESA = Endangered Species Act

USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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3. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 SOILS/EROSION

Soil types can determine the appropriate use and stability for a project area. A soil's erosion potential is important in identifying stable and unstable areas. The Lakeland Sand series is the primary soil type at TA D-51 as well as the area along the northern border of the TA (Figure 3-1). The Lakeland Sand series consists of very deep, excessively drained soils that formed in sandy marine sediments (USDA, 1995). The series has a moderate susceptibility to erosion due to high sand content; however, slope also affects erosion potential. The Lakeland soils have limited water retention capacity and lack cohesiveness; as a result, erosion can be substantial on steep slopes where vegetation is cleared. While the majority of the area at TA D-51 has a slope of 0 to 5 percent, the soil surrounding Smith Branch has a slope of 12 to 30 percent (Figure 3-1). In addition, the area along the southeast end of Smith Branch is a steephead, and the stream is habitat to the endangered Okaloosa darter.

Lakeland soils are also associated with Chipley and the Dorovan-Pamlico association. Chipley sands and Dorovan-Pamlico association mucks also lie close to the project area. Only the Dorovan soils have a high degree of organic content and thus considered mucks. Dorovan-Pamlico mucks are located just outside of TA D-51. Mucks are soils composed of more than 20 percent organic matter that is highly decomposed. They are very poorly drained and strongly acidic. Water is usually at or near the surface for nine months or more each year. About 60 percent of this association is Dorovan soils, which have organic material that is more than 40 inches deep overlying sands. The Pamlico soils make up about 25 percent and have soils that are 20 to 40 inches deep (U.S. Air Force, 1993). Additional soils represented on Eglin AFB are in Table 3-1. Primary soils are also listed for comparative purposes.

3.2 WATER QUALITY AND WETLANDS

3.2.1 Water Quality

Surface waters are any waters that lie above groundwater, such as rivers, streams, and wetlands. Smith Branch is a stream located near the northern edge of TA D-51 (Figure 3-2). The state of Florida has developed and retains primacy for surface water quality standards for all waters of the state (FAC 62-301 and FAC 62-302) in accordance with the provisions of the Safe Drinking Water Act. Florida uses a classification system that identifies each water body based on its suitability for various purposes. Smith Branch is a Class III water (recreation, propagation, and maintenance of a healthy, well-balanced population of fish and wildlife). According to the FDEP Florida Water Quality Assessment 305(b) Report, Smith Branch and its linked streams rate "attains some designated uses," "no data," and "potentially impaired" (FDEP, 2004). Smith Branch does not appear on the 2002 303(d) List of Impaired Surface Waters (FDEP, 2004a).

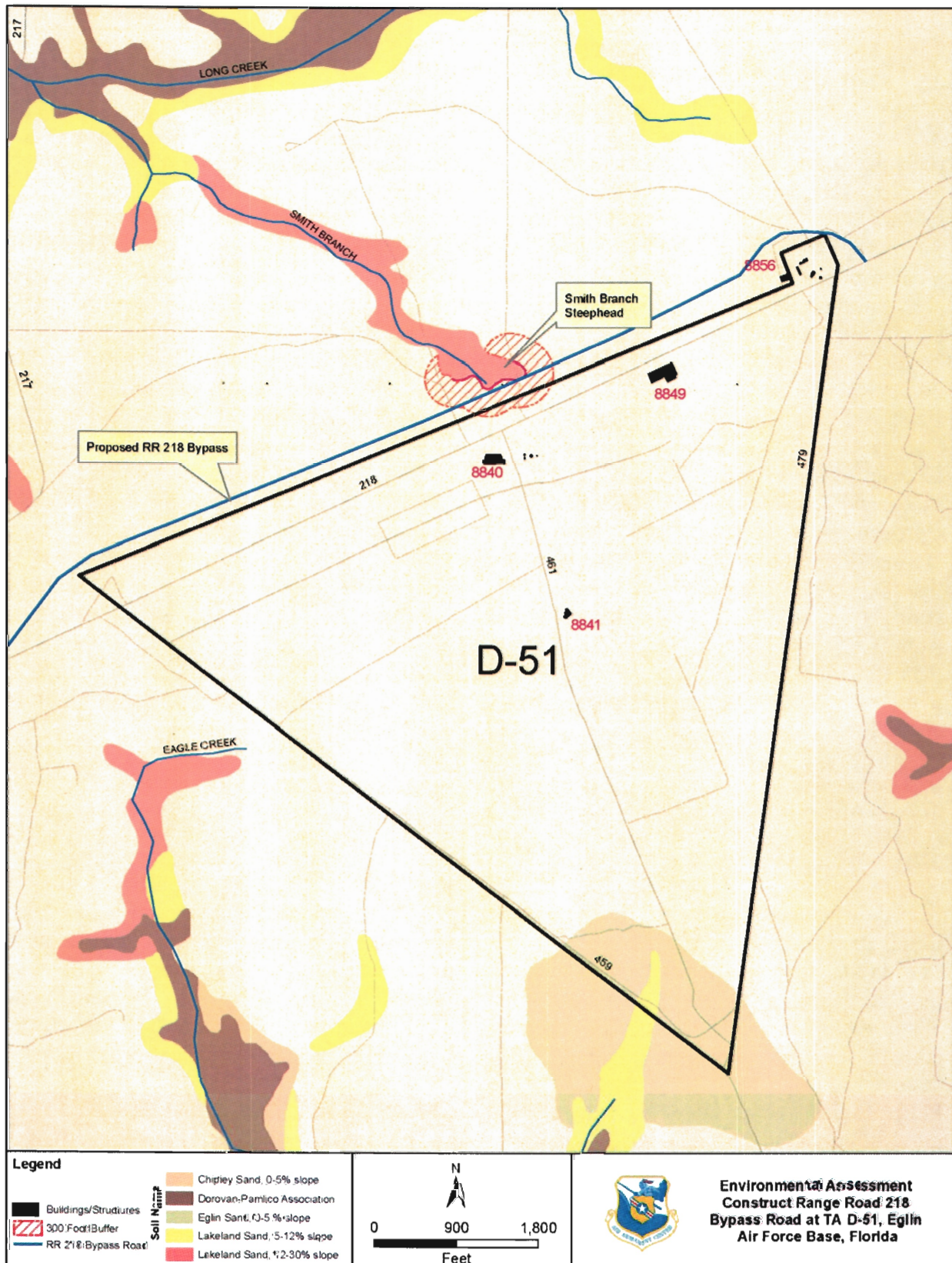


Figure 3-1. Soils at TA D-51

Table 3-1. Soil Types and Characteristics

Soil Name	Erosion Risk	Attributes	Soil Type
Lakeland Sand	Moderate to high	Yellowish brown to grayish brown	Sand
Johns Fine Sandy Loam	Moderate	Very fine grained interspersed with thick loam	Sandy Loam
Rutledge Loamy Sand	Low	Ponding, very acidic, clayey	Loamy Sand
Troup Loamy Sand	Low to moderate	Unconsolidated marine sediments, brown loam	Loamy Sand
Dorovan-Pamlico Association	Very low	Highly organic	Muck
Fuquay Loamy Sand	Low	Very acidic, ironstone nodules	Loamy Sand
Leon Sand	High to low	Marine-based sediments, can be mucky	Sand
Urban Land	Low	Variable	Variable
Pactolus Loamy Sand	Low	Thick, deep soils, very acidic	Loamy Sand
Bibb-Kinston Association	Very low	Dark concretions, gravel, high organics	Silt Loam
Udorthents	Low	Variable in acidity and texture	Silt Loam
Rutledge Sand	High	Very acidic, slow runoff	Sand
Troup Sand	Moderate	Unconsolidated marine sands	Sand
Dorovan Muck	Low	Highly organic	Muck
Foxworth Sand	Moderate	Very acidic	Sand
Chipleay and Hurricane	Moderate	Moderately acidic	Sand
Bonifay Loamy Sand	Low	Very acidic, ironstone pebbles	Loamy Sand

3.2.2 Wetlands

Wetlands are defined in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Wetland Delineation Manual as “those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions” (USACE, 1987). All jurisdictional wetlands in the United States meet three wetland delineation criteria (hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology) and are protected under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 United States Code [USC] Section 1344) and its implementing regulations found in 40 Code of Federal Regulations Part 230. Wetlands on federal lands are further protected under EO 11990, Protection of Wetlands, which states “...each federal agency shall provide leadership and shall take action to minimize the destruction, loss or degradation of wetlands...” Additionally, EO 11990 requires federal agencies to avoid undertaking or providing assistance for new construction located in wetlands unless there are no practicable alternatives and all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands are implemented.

Activities that may affect wetlands may require a federal and/or state permit. Federal permits under Section 404 of the CWA (33 USC 1344) are administered through USACE for dredge, fill, and/or discharge activities within waters or wetlands of the United States. FDEP, through the Florida Water Resources Permit Program, provides regulatory oversight through issuance of a Water Resource Permit for dredging, filling, or constructing in, on, or over waters or wetlands that are connected, either naturally or artificially to “named waters” (FDEP, 2005). Activities should avoid affecting wetlands if possible, and the planning process should reduce or minimize ground-disturbing projects or actions occurring in a wetland.

Figure 3-2 provides the location of wetland areas in the vicinity of the Proposed Action area as identified by the Eglin AFB geographic information system (GIS) wetland data layer. According to the map, a wetland area is potentially near the existing fence line.

3.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Biological resources include living resources (i.e., plants and wildlife) and the sensitive habitats that support them (e.g., wetlands, special natural areas and preserves, floodplains). Eglin uses a classification system based on ecological associations that were developed based on floral, faunal, and geophysical characteristics. The Eglin AFB Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) (U.S. Air Force, 2002) and the Environmental Baseline Study Resource Appendices describe these ecological associations (U.S. Air Force, 2003).

3.3.1 Ecological Associations

Ecological associations are general descriptions used to provide a broad understanding of the character of the resource base. Eglin has five major ecological associations, three of which occur within the study area: sandhills, open grassland/shrubland, and wetland/riparian (swamp) (Figures 3-3). Detailed descriptions of these associations, including typical plant and animal species, are in the 2002-2006 Eglin AFB Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan. The wetland and riparian associations contain marshy and swampy areas, which also include rivers, creeks, and streams. The sandhills association is the largest on Eglin AFB and includes the sand pine and pine/mixed hardwood ecosystems. As indicated in Figure 3-3, the area along the northern boundary of TA D-51 is primarily sand pine (sandhills association); the remaining area is wetland/riparian. The open grassland association dominates the area within the TA D-51 boundary. Table 3-2 summarizes the plant and animal species normally found in these ecological associations.

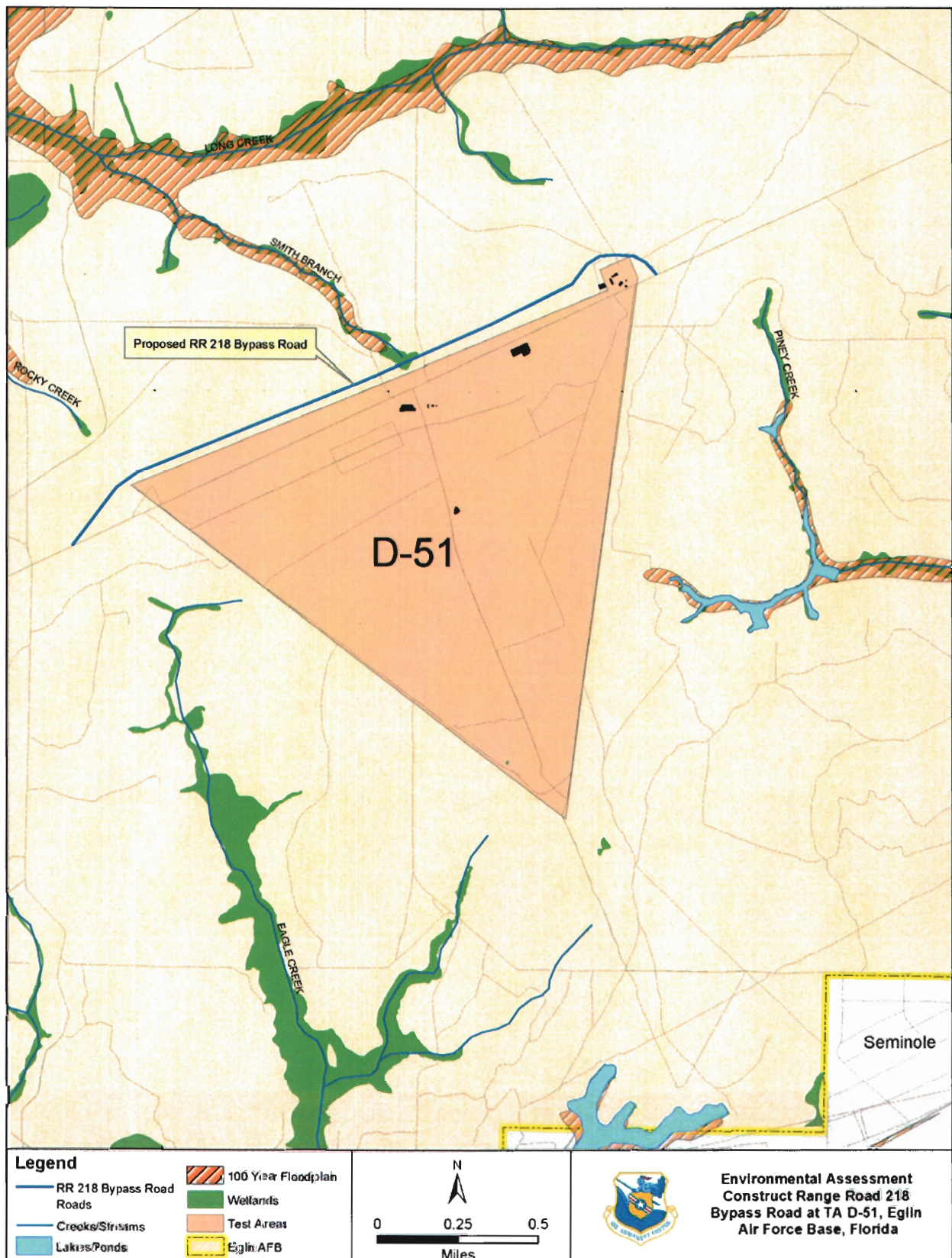


Figure 3-2. Water Resources at TA D-51

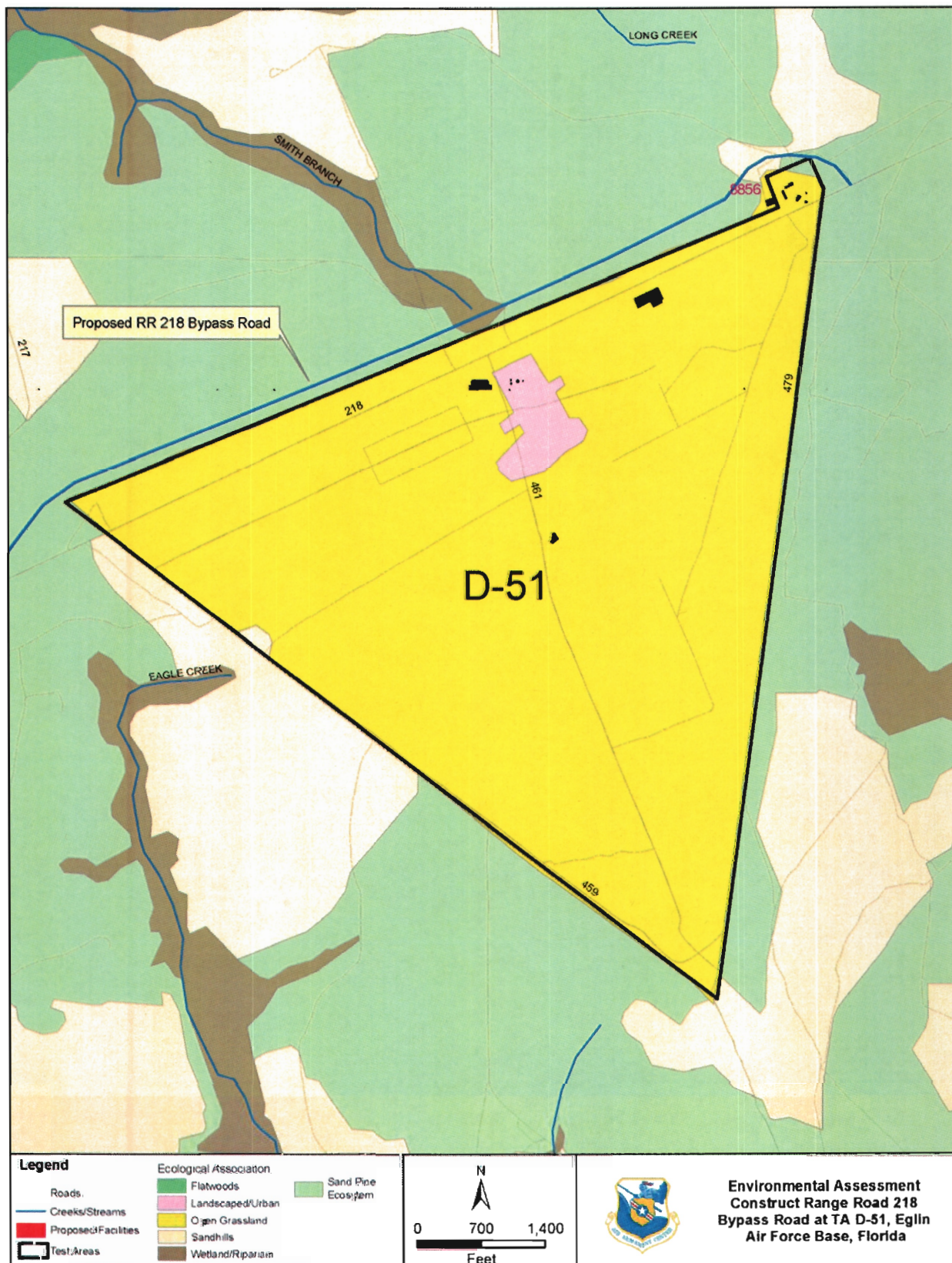


Figure 3-3. Ecological Associations at TA D-51

Table 3-2. Typical Plant and Animal Species of the Eglin Land Test and Training Ranges

Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
Sandhills Ecological Association			
Long leaf pine	<i>Pinus palustris</i>	Red-cockaded woodpecker	<i>Picoides borealis</i>
Turkey oak	<i>Quercus laevis</i>	Bobwhite quail	<i>Colinus virginianus</i>
Blackjack oak	<i>Q. marilandica</i>	Great horned owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>
Bluejack oak	<i>Q. incana</i>	Gopher tortoise	<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>
Wiregrass	<i>Aristida stricta</i>	Indigo snake	<i>Drymarchon corais</i>
Saw palmetto	<i>Serona repens</i>	Diamondback rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus adamanteus</i>
Bracken fern	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Six-lined racerunner	<i>Cnemidophorus sexlineatus</i>
Blueberry	<i>Vaccinium</i> spp.	Florida black bear	<i>Ursus americanus floridanus</i>
Yaupon	<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	Fox squirrel	<i>Sciurus niger</i>
Gallberry	<i>Ilex glabra</i>	Least shrew	<i>Cryptodius parva</i>
Gopher apple	<i>Licania michauxii</i>	Cottontail rabbit	<i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i>
Open Grassland/Shrubland Ecological Association			
Switch grass	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	Slender glass lizard	<i>Ophisaurus attenuatus</i>
Broomsedge	<i>Andropogon</i> spp.	Box turtle	<i>Terrapene carolina</i> subspp.
Bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium</i> spp.	Gopher tortoise	<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>
Lovegrass	<i>Eragrostis</i> spp.	Black racer	<i>Coluber constrictor</i>
Woolly panicum	<i>Dichanthelium acuminatum</i>	Diamondback rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus adamanteus</i>
Scrub oak	<i>Quercus</i> spp.	Eastern coachwhip	<i>Masticophis flagellum flagellum</i>
Southeastern American kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius paulus</i>	Indigo snake	<i>Drymarchon corais</i>
Great horned owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	Gopher frog	<i>Rana capito sevosa</i>
Screech owl	<i>Otus asio</i>	Cotton mouse	<i>Peromyscus gossypi</i>
Red-shouldered hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	Oldfield mouse	<i>Peromyscus polionotus</i>
Florida burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	Cottontail rabbit	<i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i>
Wetland and Riparian Ecological Association			
(Freshwater)			
Yellow water lily	Spp.	Raccoon	<i>Procyon lotor</i>
Saw grass	<i>Cladium jamaicensis</i>	Florida black bear	<i>Ursus americanus floridanus</i>
Cattail	<i>Typha domingensis</i>	Sherman's fox squirrel	<i>Sciurus niger shermani</i>
Phragmites	<i>Phragmites australis</i>	American alligator	<i>Alligator mississippiensis</i>
White cedar	<i>Chamaecyparis thyoides</i>	Pine barrens tree frog	<i>Hyla andersonii</i>
Water tupelo	<i>Nyssa biflora</i>	Five-lined skink	<i>Eumeces fasciatus</i>
Pitcher plant	<i>Sarracenia purpurea</i>	Green anole	<i>Anolis carolinensis</i>
Red titi	<i>Cyrilla racemiflora</i>	Garter snake	<i>Thamnophis sirtalis</i>
Tulip poplar	<i>Liriodendrom tulipifera</i>	Indigo snake	<i>Drymarchon corais</i>
Sweet bay magnolia	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>	American beaver	<i>Castor Canadensis</i>
Red bay	<i>Persea borbonia</i>	Parula warbler	<i>Parula Americana</i>

U.S. Air Force, 2003

3.3.2 Sensitive Species

An endangered species is one that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A threatened species is any species that is likely to become endangered within the future throughout all or a significant portion of its range due to factors such as loss of habitat and anthropogenic effects. A candidate species is one for which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has on file sufficient information on biological vulnerability to warrant a listing, but the listing is precluded at the present time. Once legally protected, it is a federal offense to “take” (import, export, kill, harm, harass, possess, or remove) protected animals from the wild without a permit. Federal candidate species should be given consideration during planning of projects but have no protection under the Endangered Species Act. Similar regulations are in place for state-listed species (endangered, threatened, or species of special concern).

Under 16 USC 1531 to 1544; 1997-Supp; Endangered Species Act 1973, federal agencies must ensure that their actions (including permitting) do not jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species or destroy or adversely modify the habitat of such species without a permit and must set up a conservation program. A Section 7 consultation with the USFWS would be required if a take, which is defined as pursuing, molesting, or harming a protected species, were to occur. If the Proposed Action were likely to adversely affect a federally protected species, the USFWS would determine whether jeopardy or nonjeopardy to the species population would occur. As a result, Air Force projects that may affect, either directly or indirectly, federally protected species, species proposed for federal listing, or critical habitat for protected species are subject to Sections 7 and 10 of the Endangered Species Act prior to the irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources (U.S. Air Force, 2003).

As indicated in Figure 3-4, the only sensitive species within the project area is the federally endangered Okaloosa darter. The Okaloosa darter is in six small Choctawhatchee Bay Basin tributaries located in the sandhills ecological association of the Eglin Mainland Reservation. One of these tributaries, Smith Creek, is located on the northern edge of TA D-51. Okaloosa darter habitat is sensitive to a variety of disturbances. Erosion can increase siltation and imperil the darter’s habitat. In order to protect the Okaloosa darter, the quantity and quality of water in the streams must be protected. USFWS recommends a 300-foot or greater buffer to enhance riparian wildlife (USFWS, 2001).

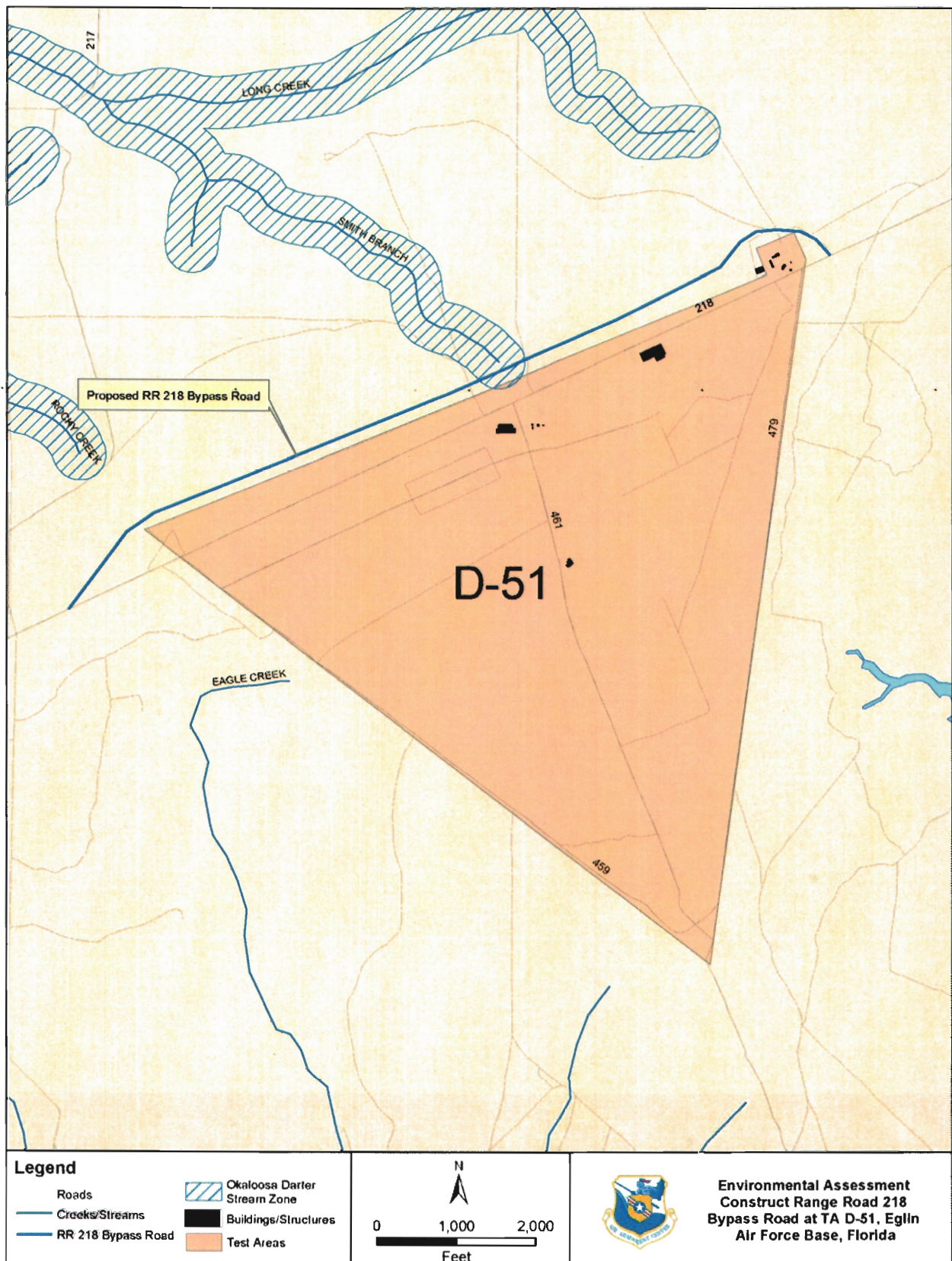


Figure 3-4. Sensitive Species Near TA D-51

3.4 TRANSPORTATION

The existing transportation infrastructure for the Eglin range complex is a series of range roads. Personnel use these range roads to access the various test areas and recreation areas throughout the reservation. Eglin AFB maintains the range roads. RR 200 and 218 are paved two-lane roads; RR 219 is an unimproved roadway. The typical travel distance from Fort Walton Beach to TA C-52, utilizing RR 218, is 24.6 miles. Emergency response vehicles utilize RR 218 to reach TA C-52 and recreation areas to the east of TA D-51. The Range Patrol provides emergency response to the reservation and conducts security patrols. Transportation of explosives is permissible on all roads on the Eglin range complex (Monzone, 2005).

The Motor Carrier Compliance Office (MCCO) of the Florida Department of Transportation provides oversight for roadways such as State Highway 285 and State Highway 20. According to the Panama City District MCCO, no specific classification of roadways exists to denote transportation of explosives or other hazardous materials.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 SOILS

The evaluation of the impact to soils includes the minimization of soil erosion and the assessment of soil limitations. Assessment of the area of potential soil disturbance determines the suitability and permit requirements. Typically, incorporation of erosion control measures into the project can minimize or avoid impacts.

4.1.1 Proposed Action

Since the Proposed Action would involve disturbing more than five acres of land, an NPDES Large Construction General Permit, FAC 62-621-300, would be required (FDEP, 2003). Proper installation, inspection, and maintenance would be required under the general permit. Incorporation of a Stormwater, Erosion, and Sedimentation Plan, Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, and BMPs into the construction process would occur as required by regulations implemented by FDEP.

Approximately 18 acres of land would be disturbed during implementation of the Proposed Action. Erosion risks in the area vary by soil type and slope; however, the areas that contain Lakeland Sand have a potential moderate-to-high level of erosion hazard and should be subject to erosion prevention planning. The operation of heavy construction equipment has the potential to accelerate soil erosion, mainly through ground disturbance and damage to anchor vegetation. Because road construction and land clearing activities would occur within the steephead area adjacent to the Smith Branch, with slopes from 12 to 30 percent, soil erosion would likely occur. Implementation of BMPs such as hay bales and silt fencing would potentially reduce soil erosion; however, adverse impacts to soils would be likely, due to the soil type, slope, and proximity to a water body.

4.1.2 Alternative Action A (Preferred Alternative)

The same NPDES permit and plans required under the Proposed Action would be required for Alternative Action A, due to soil disturbance of more than 5 acres. Road construction and land clearing activities would occur more than 300 feet from the steephead area adjacent to Smith Branch, therefore not affecting the steephead. The Preferred Alternative area has a 0 to 5 percent slope. Maintaining a distance of at least 100 feet of water bodies during ground disturbance decreases the potential for erosion; thus minimization of potential erosion from the Preferred Alternative would occur with the implementation of BMPs such as hay bales and silt fencing. No adverse impacts associated with soil erosion are expected, based on soil characteristics at the site coupled with the implementation of BMPs identified in Chapter 5.

4.1.3 Alternative Action B

Under the Alternative Action B no new construction or land clearing would occur, and thus no soil disturbance and/or impact to soils would occur.

4.1.4 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative no new construction or land clearing would occur, and thus no soil disturbance and/or impact to soils would occur.

4.2 WATER QUALITY AND WETLANDS

This section discusses potential impacts to water quality and wetlands within and adjacent to the project area. Analysis focuses on assessing the potential for impacts to water quality and wetlands from land clearing and construction and identifying methods to reduce the potential for negative impacts from these activities.

4.2.1 Proposed Action

As part of the NPDES permit, a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan would be required (Chapter 5) and would include identification of appropriate controls, BMPs, and measures to minimize the stormwater impact. In addition to the NPDES permit, a construction permit under the State Stormwater Rule, FAC 62-25, would also be required for the Proposed Action. Because road construction and land clearing activities would occur less than 300 feet from the steephead area adjacent to the Smith Branch, impacts to water quality would likely occur. Implementation of BMPs such as hay bales and silt fencing would potentially reduce soil erosion; however, adverse impacts to water quality would be likely due to the soil type, slope, and proximity to a water body.

In addition, based on GIS wetland data layers, the Proposed Action may be near jurisdictional wetlands. Avoidance of wetland areas during road construction is mandatory. It is recommended that site specific wetland delineation be accomplished.

4.2.2 Alternative Action A (Preferred Alternative)

The same NPDES permit and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan required under the Proposed Action would be required for Alternative Action A. Practices such as silt fences and hay bales implemented during site preparation and construction activities would minimize stormwater effects related to soil disturbance. In addition, a comprehensive Stormwater, Erosion, and Sedimentation Plan would be required. Road construction and land clearing would occur more than 300 feet from Smith Branch and wetland area, and therefore the Preferred Alternative would not adversely impact water.

4.2.3 Alternative Action B

Under the Alternative Action B no new construction or land clearing would occur, and thus no impact to water quality or wetlands would occur.

4.2.4 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative no new construction or land clearing would occur, and thus no impact to water quality or wetlands would occur.

4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

This section discusses potential impacts to the ecological associations and sensitive species located within and adjacent to the Proposed Action project area. Analysis focuses on assessing the potential for impacts to the ecological associations and sensitive species from land clearing and construction and identifying methods to reduce the potential for negative impacts from these activities.

4.3.1 Proposed Action

Since the proposed bypass road would be near the existing range road and EOD operations areas, animals near TA D-51 are already acclimated to the existing environmental conditions. Land clearing involved with the creation of the bypass roadway would alter approximately 18 acres of area currently in the sandhills association and would alter approximately one acre of swamp area. The area along the fence line is somewhat disturbed due to the presence of a perimeter security patrol area (clay/dirt road). The land clearing in the swamp area would violate the USFWS-recommended 300-foot habitat buffer and potentially impact the Okaloosa darter. As a result, an Endangered Species Act, Section 7 consultation would be required.

4.3.2 Alternative Action A (Preferred Alternative)

As in the Proposed Action, alteration of approximately 18 acres of area currently in the sandhills association would occur. Impacts to the ecological association are expected to be minimal since the surrounding Eglin AFB property comprises over 345,000 acres of sandhills association area. In addition, the proposed cleared area is somewhat disturbed, due to the presence of a perimeter road along the fence, thereby further minimizing the overall impact to the ecological association. The Preferred Alternative would generate a minimal change to the area surrounding TA D-51 and as a result, negative impacts to species potentially present in the sandhills association would not likely occur.

Although the Okaloosa darter is potentially present in Smith Branch, all proposed activities would be outside the recommended 300-foot buffer and therefore no impacts to species would occur and no consultations with USFWS are required.

4.3.3 Alternative Action B

Under the Alternative Action B no new construction or land clearing would occur, and thus no impacts to biological resources would occur.

4.3.4 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative no new construction or land clearing would occur, and thus no impacts to biological resources would occur.

4.4 TRANSPORTATION

Analysis focuses on assessing the potential for impacts to transportation including travel distance, road conditions, emergency response capabilities, and impacts to access to recreation areas.

4.4.1 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, the travel distance to TA C-52 would increase by less than a mile while allowing unimpeded traffic flow. Emergency management, TA C-52 commuters, and recreation area patrons would be able to pass the TA D-51 area without potential time delay resulting from the security checkpoint. Eglin AFB would incorporate the new roadway into the reservation inventory of roads that require maintenance. Transportation to TA C-52 and the recreation areas is expected to improve with implementation of the Proposed Action and, therefore, would result in a positive impact.

4.4.2 Alternative Action A (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative Action A the impacts to transportation would be the same as those identified under the Proposed Action.

4.4.3 Alternative Action B

Alternative Action B would result in a typical commuting distance of 22.4 miles from Fort Walton Beach to TA C-52. Although the typical commuting distance would be slightly less than that under Proposed Action, the portion of the route on RR 219 is on unimproved road and, therefore, the time necessary to travel this portion would be expected to be greater than travel time on paved roadways. The speed limit along RR 219 is also less than along RR 218, which would further increase the travel time. In addition, unimproved roadways are susceptible to adverse weather conditions, and increases in use would potentially increase the erosion potential along the roadway. An increase in maintenance frequency would likely occur as a result of increased use. While TA C-52 commuters and recreation area patrons would utilize the alternate route, emergency response personnel would utilize RR 218 as their preferred route to TA C-52. Although travel time would be greater than that under existing conditions and maintenance would likely increase, the impacts to transportation are not expected to be significant.

4.4.4 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative impediment of traffic would occur due to the security checkpoints. No change in road maintenance would occur and the travel distance would remain the same.

4.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

According to CEQ regulations, cumulative impact analysis in an EA should consider the potential environmental impacts resulting from “the incremental impacts of the action when

added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions (40 CFR 1508.7)."

Cumulative effects to the environment may occur when the Proposed Action and other actions are expected to occur in a similar location or during a similar time period.

4.5.1 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

The Navy EOD School proposes to construct a new 5,000 square foot training facility at TA D-51. An outside EOD practical training area would be located within a large area already approved and being used as an EOD practical training area. The impact of this action is being addressed in a separate EA.

4.5.2 Analysis of Cumulative Impacts

Soils and Water Quality

Cumulative impacts to soils and water quality would be negligible since the training facility construction project would take place within the boundaries of TA D-51. Requirements for containing soil erosion have been identified in the environmental analysis documents for both actions and are to be implemented by the proponent in the event that a "Finding of No Significant Impact" is obtained.

Biological Resources

It is expected that no cumulative impacts to ecological associations would occur since the area potentially impacted by the EOD training facility construction project is not within the same ecological association as the Proposed Action.

Transportation

No cumulative impacts on transportation would be expected, since personnel at TA D-51 would not need the bypass road.

Irreversible or Irretrievable Effects

Irreversible effects primarily result when replacement of a specific resource can not occur within a reasonable timeframe due to use or destruction of the specific resource. Irretrievable resource commitments involve the loss in value of an affected resource where restoration cannot occur due to the result of the action. Development of the proposed site may result in irreversible and/or irretrievable commitment of natural resources; however, these resources could return to their natural state if removal of the proposed road occurred.

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5. PLANS, PERMITS, AND MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

The following is a list of the plan, permit, and management requirements associated with the Preferred Alternative. The need for these requirements is identified through the environmental analysis process in this EA and was developed through cooperation between the proponent and Eglin environmental personnel. These requirements are considered as part of the Preferred Alternative and would be implemented as such. Agency specific information is available in Appendix C, State of Florida Clearinghouse Comments.

Plans

- Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
- Stormwater, Erosion, and Sedimentation Plan

Permits

- NPDES Large Construction General Permit
- Stormwater Facility Design And Construction Permit
- Base Civil Engineering Dig Permit

Management Requirements

Soils/Erosion

- Installation and maintenance of entrenched silt fencing and hay bales would occur along the perimeter of the construction site prior to soil-disturbing activities. This is required as part of the stormwater construction permit.
- Inspection of silt fencing would occur on a weekly basis and after rain events. Replacement would be as needed.
- Cleared areas would be vegetated or mulched once final grade was established.

UXO

- Contact Civil Engineering-Explosive Ordnance Disposal (CE-EOD) immediately upon discovery of any UXO or suspected UXO items during soil disturbance.
- Preparation and submission of a Construction Support ESS Plan to DDESB for final approval (IAW DoD 6055.9) (C12.5.8) must occur. The Construction Support ESS Plan must be coordinated through AAC/SEOW (Eglin's Weapons Safety).

Water Quality and Wetlands

- Avoidance of wetland areas during road construction is mandatory. Performance of a site specific wetland delineation prior to construction is required.

Plans, Permits, and Management Requirements

- Maintenance of BMPs used as part of the NPDES requirements along the perimeter of the construction site would occur.
- Soil-disturbing activities would maintain a minimum 300-foot setback from Smith Branch.
- Permits and site plan designs would include site-specific management requirements for erosion and sediment control.
- Coordinate with Eglin's Environmental Engineering Section (96 CEG/CEVCE) for final stormwater design and permitting.

Biological Resources

All land clearing and construction activities associated with the proposed project would maintain a minimum 300-foot buffer from Smith Branch.

6. LIST OF PREPARERS

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7. LIST OF CONTACTS

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Motor Carrier Compliance Office
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MSgt. Monzone
AAC Weapons Safety
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Eugene Jackson
Navy EOD
TA D-51 at Eglin AFB

Dale Whittington
Solid Waste Program Manager
Environmental Management, Eglin AFB

List of Contacts

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8. REFERENCES AND APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS

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References and Applicable Documents

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APPENDIX A

PHOTOS OF EXISTING AREA SURROUNDING TA D-51





Figure A-1. Intersection of RR 219 and RR 218



Figure A-2. Security Gate on RR 218 at TA D-51



Figure A-3. Northwest Corner of Security Perimeter Road Outside TA D-51



Figure A-4. Steep Slope in the Sandhill Association Approaching Smith Branch

APPENDIX B

**COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT (CZMA)
CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION**



**FEDERAL AGENCY COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT (CZMA) CONSISTENCY
DETERMINATION****INTRODUCTION**

This document provides the State of Florida with the U.S. Air Force's Consistency Determination under the CZMA Section 307 and 15 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 930 sub-part C. The information in this Consistency Determination is provided pursuant to 15 C.F.R. Section 930.39 and Section 307 of the CZMA, 16 United States Code (USC) § 1456, as amended, and its implementing regulations at 15 CFR Part 930.

Proposed Federal Agency Action

The Preferred Alternative is to construct a paved, two-lane bypass road along the northern edge of Test Area (TA) D-51 (Figure 2-1), which is the location of Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal [NEOD] School. As indicated in Figure 2-1 of this EA the bypass road would intersect Range Road (RR) 218 outside of the security gate areas for TA D-51. The road would be approximately 2.3 miles long, with approximately 18 acres being disturbed. The proposed road would be approximately 20 feet wide with 25 feet of shoulder on each side of the new pavement. The anticipated path of the bypass would be parallel to the northern boundary fence line. Approximately 1,000 linear feet of fence line would need to be moved 200-feet toward RR 218 in order to accommodate a 300-foot riparian buffer near the end of Smith Branch Creek (Figure 3-4). Smith Branch Creek is home to the federally endangered Okaloosa darter. The bypass road would mimic the necessary offset of the fence line. The exact fence and roadway location would be assessed based on a site survey. Photographs of the project area are included in Appendix A to the Environmental Assessment (Figures A-2 and A-3).

Federal Consistency Review

Statutes addressed as part of the Florida Coastal Zone Management Program consistency review and considered in the analysis of the Preferred Alternative are discussed in the following table.

Pursuant to 15 CFR § 930.41 the Florida State Clearinghouse has 60 days from receipt of this document in which to concur with or object to this Consistency Determination, or to request an extension, in writing, under 15 CFR § 930.41(b). Florida's concurrence will be presumed if Eglin AFB does not receive its response on the 60th day from receipt of this determination.

Florida Coastal Management Program Consistency Review

Statute	Consistency	Scope
Chapter 161 <i>Beach and Shore Preservation</i>	The Preferred Alternative would not affect beach and shore management, specifically as it pertains to: -The Coastal Construction Permit Program -The Coastal Construction Control Line (CCCL) Permit Program -The Coastal Zone Protection Program All land activities occurred on federal property.	Authorizes the Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems within FDEP to regulate construction on or seaward of the states' beaches.
Chapter 163, Part II <i>Growth Policy; County and Municipal Planning; Land Development Regulation</i>	The Preferred Alternative would occur on federal property and is not anticipated to adversely affect local government comprehensive plans as they pertain to public interest.	Requires local governments to prepare, adopt, and implement comprehensive plans that encourage the most appropriate use of land and natural resources in a manner consistent with the public interest.
Chapter 186 <i>State and Regional Planning</i>	There would be no effect on state or regional planning requirements as a result of the Preferred Alternative.	Details state-level planning requirements. Requires the development of special statewide plans governing water use, land development, and transportation.
Chapter 252 <i>Emergency Management</i>	The Preferred Alternative would not increase the state's vulnerability to natural disasters. Emergency response and evacuation procedures would not be impacted by the Preferred Alternative.	Provides for planning and implementation of the state's response to, efforts to recover from, and the mitigation of natural and manmade disasters.
Chapter 253 <i>State Lands</i>	The Preferred Alternative would occur on federal property only.	Addresses the state's administration of public lands and property of this state and provides direction regarding the acquisition, disposal, and management of all state lands.
Chapter 258 <i>State Parks and Preserves</i>	State parks, recreational areas, and aquatic preserves would not be affected by the Preferred Alternative. Neither digging nor boring would occur within any aquatic preserves.	Addresses administration and management of state parks and preserves (Chapter 258).
Chapter 259 <i>Land Acquisition for Conservation or Recreation</i>	No state lands or outdoor recreation would be impacted by the Preferred Alternative.	Authorizes acquisition of environmentally endangered lands and outdoor recreation lands (Chapter 259).
Chapter 260 <i>Recreational Trails System</i>	Tourism and outdoor recreation would not be affected by the Preferred Alternative. No restrictions to state trails would occur. The Preferred Alternative would have no negative impacts on public recreation.	Authorizes acquisition of land to create a recreational trails system and to facilitate management of the system (Chapter 260).

Florida Coastal Management Program Consistency Review Cont'd

Statute	Consistency	Scope
Chapter 375 <i>Multipurpose Outdoor Recreation; Land Acquisition, Management, and Conservation</i>	Opportunities for recreation on state lands would not be affected.	Develops comprehensive multipurpose outdoor recreation plan to document recreational supply and demand, describe current recreational opportunities, estimate need for additional recreational opportunities, and propose means to meet the identified needs (Chapter 375).
Chapter 267 <i>Historical Resources</i>	No cultural resources are known to exist in the area of the Preferred Alternative. All ground-disturbing activities at Eglin must be subject to prior consultation with and approval by Eglin's Cultural Resources Branch (96 CEG/CEVH), which oversees and maintains records on all cultural resource activities on the base. Additionally, should any archeological material be inadvertently discovered during the course of construction, all actions in the immediate vicinity would cease and 96 CEG/CEVH would be contacted with efforts being taken to prevent the find from further impact.	Addresses management and preservation of the state's archaeological and historical resources.
Chapter 288 <i>Commercial Development and Capital Improvements</i>	The Preferred Alternative is not anticipated to have any effect on future business opportunities on state lands, or the promotion of tourism in the region.	Provides the framework for promoting and developing the general business, trade, and tourism components of the state economy.
Chapter 334 <i>Transportation Administration</i>	The Preferred Alternative would not have an impact on transportation.	Addresses the state's policy concerning transportation administration (Chapter 334).
Chapter 339 <i>Transportation Finance and Planning</i>	There would be no effect on the finance and planning needs of the state's transportation system.	Addresses the finance and planning needs of the state's transportation system (Chapter 339).
Chapter 370 <i>Saltwater Fisheries</i>	The Preferred Alternative would not affect saltwater fisheries.	Addresses management and protection of the state's saltwater fisheries.
Chapter 372 <i>Wildlife</i>	BMPs would be utilized to minimize any affect that may occur to the sensitive species habitat that is located within 300 feet of the proposed construction site. The Preferred Alternative includes a 300-foot buffer around the Okaloosa darter stream to avoid and minimize impacts.	Addresses the management of the wildlife resources of the state.
Chapter 373 <i>Water Resources</i>	There are no wetlands or floodplains within or adjacent to the construction site. Impervious surface area would increase, resulting in an increase in stormwater runoff. Given the scope of the project, an NPDES general permit for stormwater discharge (FAC. 62-621) and a stormwater facility design and construction permit would be required.	Addresses the state's policy concerning water resources.

Florida Coastal Management Program Consistency Review Cont'd

Statute	Consistency	Scope
Chapter 376 <i>Pollutant Discharge Prevention and Removal</i>	The Preferred Alternative does not involve the transfer, storage, or transportation of pollutants.	Regulates transfer, storage, and transportation of pollutants, and cleanup of pollutant discharges.
Chapter 377 <i>Energy Resources</i>	Energy resource production, including oil and gas, and the transportation of oil and gas, would not be affected	Addresses regulation, planning, and development of energy resources of the state.
Chapter 380 <i>Land and Water Management</i>	Under the Preferred Alternative, development of state lands with regional (i.e., more than one county) impacts would not occur. Areas of critical state concern or areas with approved state resource management plans such as the Northwest Florida Coast would not be affected. Changes to coastal infrastructure such as bridge construction, capacity increases of existing coastal infrastructure, or use of state funds for infrastructure planning, designing or construction would not occur.	Establishes land and water management policies to guide and coordinate local decisions relating to growth and development.
Chapter 381 <i>Public Health, General Provisions</i>	The Preferred Alternative would not have an impact on the state's policy concerning public health system.	Establishes public policy concerning the state's public health system.
Chapter 388 <i>Mosquito Control</i>	The Preferred Alternative would not affect mosquito control efforts.	Addresses mosquito control effort in the state.
Chapter 403 <i>Environmental Control</i>	The Preferred Alternative would not affect ecological systems and water quality of state waters. No combustive emissions or fugitive dust is anticipated to occur as a result of this action. Air quality criteria would not be exceeded and the impacts would not be significant.	Establishes public policy concerning environmental control in the state.
Chapter 582 <i>Soil and Water Conservation</i>	The Preferred Alternative would involve disturbing more than 5 acres of land, thus an NPDES large construction general permit, FAC 62-621-300 site-specific stormwater pollution prevention plan would be required and would include identification of appropriate controls, BMPs, and measures to minimize the stormwater impact. In addition to the NPDES permit, a construction permit under the State Stormwater Rule, FAC 62-25, would also be required for the Preferred Alternative. Practices such as silt fences and hay bales would be implemented during site preparation and construction activities to minimize stormwater effects related to soil disturbance. In addition, a comprehensive stormwater, erosion, and sedimentation plan would be required. Road construction and land clearing would occur more than 300 feet from Smith Branch and wetland area and, therefore, the Preferred Alternative would not adversely impact water.	Provides for the control and prevention of soil erosion.

BMP =best management practice; FAC = Florida Administrative Code; FDEP = Florida Department of Environmental Protection; NPDES = National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

APPENDIX C

STATE OF FLORIDA
CLEARINGHOUSE COMMENTS





Jeb Bush
Governor

Department of Environmental Protection

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Colleen M. Castille
Secretary

January 10, 2006

Ms. Elizabeth B. Vanta
Chief, Environmental Analysis Section
Department of the Air Force
501 De Leon Street, Suite 101
Eglin AFB, FL 32542-5133

RE: Department of the Air Force – Draft Environmental Assessment, Construct
Range Road 218 Bypass Road at Test Area D-51, Eglin Air Force Base –
Walton County, Florida.
SAI # FL200511211670C

Dear Ms. Vanta:

The Florida State Clearinghouse, pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 12372, Gubernatorial Executive Order 95-359, the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1451-1464, as amended, and the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321, 4331-4335, 4341-4347, as amended, has coordinated a review of the above-referenced project.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has reviewed the above-referenced Draft Environmental Assessment from the U.S. Department of the Air Force for the proposed construction of a road to bypass Range Road 218 at Test Area D-51 on Eglin Air Force Base. DEP staff notes that the Proposed Action and Alternative Action A appear to create an increase in impervious area. As stated in the project narrative, if either of those options is chosen, a stormwater permit application should be submitted to the DEP. The Proposed Action consists of constructing a paved, two-lane bypass road along the northern edge of TA D-51 with proposed wetland impacts (estimated at 0.5 acres of fill). If the option chosen requires a DEP wetland resource permit, a stormwater permit application should be submitted to the DEP only after the wetland resource permit application has been deemed complete. If the project will disturb one or more acres of land during construction, the project must also meet NPDES permitting requirements. Please refer to the enclosed DEP memorandum for additional details.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) recommends that a systematic survey for gopher tortoises be conducted in the immediate footprint of the preferred alignment before land clearing and construction occur. If any gopher tortoises or burrows are found, the tortoises should be relocated out of the area in accordance with FWC permit #

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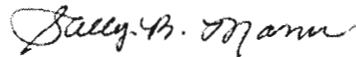
Ms. Elizabeth B. Vanta
January 10, 2006
Page 2 of 2

WR05399. The FWC staff notes that the preferred alternative (Alternative Action A), as detailed in the Draft Environmental Assessment, is not expected to significantly impact state-listed species. If the project is expected, however, to encounter other listed species prior to or during construction, or if the project is expected to disturb, harm, or result in the capture of state-listed species, their nests, or eggs, the applicant should visit FWC's website (<http://myfwc.com/permits/Protected-Wildlife/>) for information on permit application requirements, and contact the Wildlife Permit Coordinator within the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation with specific permitting questions. Please refer to the enclosed FWC memorandum for additional details.

Based on the information contained in the Draft Environmental Assessment and the comments provided by our reviewing agencies, the state has determined that, at this stage, the proposed project is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). The applicant must, however, address the issues identified by DEP and FWC staff prior to project implementation. The state's continued concurrence with the project will be based, in part, on the adequate resolution of issues identified during this and subsequent reviews. The state's final concurrence of the project's consistency with the FCMP will be determined during the environmental permitting stage.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the proposed project. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Lori Cox at (850) 245-2187.

Yours sincerely,



Sally B. Mann, Director
Office of Intergovernmental Programs

SBM/lec

Enclosures

cc: Darryl Boudreau, DEP, Northwest District
Mary Ann Poole, FWC

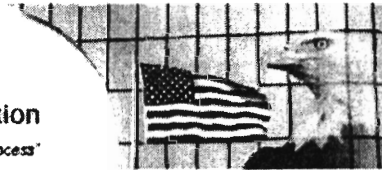


Florida

Department of Environmental Protection

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Project Information	
Project:	FL200511211670C
Comments Due:	12/22/2005
Letter Due:	01/10/2006
Description:	DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, CONSTRUCT RANGE ROAD 218 BYPASS ROAD AT TEST AREA D-51, EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE - WALTON COUNTY, FLORIDA.
Keywords:	USAF - RANGE ROAD 218 BYPASS ROAD AT TEST AREA D-51, EGLIN AFB - WALTON CO.
CFDA #:	12.200
Agency Comments:	
WALTON -	
WEST FLORIDA RPC - WEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL	
No Comment	
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	
FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION - FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION	
<p>FWC recommends that a systematic survey for gopher tortoises be conducted in the immediate footprint of the preferred alignment before land clearing and construction occur. If any gopher tortoises or burrows are found, the tortoises should be relocated out of the area per FWC permit #WR05399. Should other listed species be encountered prior to or during construction or if the project is expected to disturb, harm, result in capture, or take of state-listed species, their nests, or eggs, the applicant should visit http://myfwc.com/permits/Protected-Wildlife/ for information on permit application requirements, and contact the Wildlife Permit Coordinator within the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation with specific permitting questions. Staff notes that the preferred alternative (Alternative Action A), as detailed in the EA, is not expected to significantly impact state-listed species. For further information on the recommendations contained in FWC's report, please contact Ms. Mary Ann Poole at (850) 488-6661 or Mr. Billy Sermons in FWC's Panama City office at (850) 265-3677.</p>	
STATE - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE	
No Comment/Consistent	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	
<p>The Proposed Action and Alternative Action A appear to be the two options creating an increase in impervious area. DEP staff notes that if either of these options is chosen, a stormwater permit application should be submitted to the DEP as stated in the project narrative. The Proposed Action consists of constructing a paved, two-lane bypass road along the northern edge of TA D-51 with proposed wetland impacts (estimated at 0.5 acres of fill). Alternative Action A is similar to the Proposed Action, i.e. a road would still be constructed in the same general vicinity but this option does not appear to impact wetlands. If the option chosen requires an FDEP wetland permit, a stormwater permit application should be submitted to the FDEP only after the wetland permit application is deemed complete. If the project will disturb one or more acres of land during construction, the project will also be required to meet NPDES permitting requirements. For further information on the recommendations contained in DEP's report, please contact Ms. Lon Cox at (850) 245-2187 or Mr. Darryl Boudreau in DEP's Pensacola office at (850) 595-8300 ext. 1161.</p>	
NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD - NORTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT	
No Comment	

For more information please contact the Clearinghouse Office at:

3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000

Memorandum

Florida Department of
Environmental Protection

TO: Florida State Clearinghouse

FROM: Lori Cox, Environmental Specialist III
Office of Intergovernmental Programs

DATE: January 10, 2006

SUBJECT: U.S. Department of the Air Force – Draft Environmental Assessment,
Construct Range Road 218 Bypass Road at Test Area D-51, Eglin Air Force
Base – Walton County, Florida
SAI # FL200511211670C

The Department's Northwest District office staff has reviewed the above-referenced Draft Environmental Assessment from the U.S. Department of the Air Force for the proposed construction of a road to bypass Range Road 218 at Test Area D-51 on Eglin Air Force Base. As stated in the Purpose and Need section of the report, the proposed action is necessary to provide unimpeded vehicular traffic flow around Test Area D-51.

The Proposed Action and Alternative Action A appear to be the two options creating an increase in impervious area. Department staff notes that if either of these options is chosen, a stormwater permit application should be submitted to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as stated in the project narrative. The Proposed Action consists of constructing a paved, two-lane bypass road along the northern edge of TA D-51 with proposed wetland impacts (estimated at 0.5 acres of fill). Alternative Action A is similar to the Proposed Action, i.e. a road would still be constructed in the same general vicinity, but this option does not appear to impact wetlands. If the option chosen requires a DEP wetland resource permit, a stormwater permit application should be submitted to the Department only after the wetland resource permit application is deemed complete.

The project narrative mentions that 'an NPDES Large Construction General Permit' and a 'Stormwater Facility Design and Construction Permit' would be required by the DEP. Since the disturbed area involves one (1) acre or more of land, the applicant is correct in that a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Permit for Construction Activity would be needed. The permit application should be submitted to the DEP NPDES Stormwater Section in Tallahassee. Based on the project scope and necessary stormwater facility design, it appears that the project could be permitted under a General Permit (GP) for New Stormwater Discharge Facility Construction or possibly a Swale Exemption as defined in Chapter 62-25, *Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)*. The application for stormwater facility design should be submitted to the DEP Northwest District office in Pensacola.

The document mentions steep grades in the vicinity of the southern tip of Smith Branch (12% to 30% slopes) where a portion of the road would be constructed. Enhanced erosion control measures during construction would therefore be required in this particular area. These should

Memorandum
January 10, 2006
Page 2 of 2

be clearly depicted in the GP application (or application for Swale Exemption). In addition, Department staff notes that the permanent erosion control measures described in the document as 'cleared areas would be vegetated or mulched once final grade has been established' should also include seeding. If slopes of 2(horizontal):1(vertical) are used, pinned sod should be utilized in place of seeding and mulching.

Finally, Department staff notes that Lakeland soils are mentioned as the primary soil type present in the vicinity of the TA D-51 area including the area along its northern border where the road construction is proposed. Other soils with much less permeable characteristics and with a much shallower ground water table are also described (such as the Dorovan-Pamlico association) as 'lying close to the project area.' For this reason, the applicant should ensure that the soil permeability and depth to ground water table data used in the stormwater design calculations are representative of the entire area used for treatment of stormwater run-off. Staff also recommends showing the various soil types present at the location of the proposed stormwater treatment facility on the construction plans.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Assessment. We request that future draft environmental documents prepared for this project be forwarded to the State Clearinghouse for interagency review. Further evaluation(s) of the project will be conducted during the environmental documentation and permitting stages. And, future consistency will be based in part on adequate consideration of comments offered in this and subsequent reviews. Please call Ms. Lori Cox at (850) 245-2187 if you have any questions or need additional information.

cc: Darryl Boudreau

FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION



RODNEY BARRETO
Miami

SANDRA T. KAUPÉ
Palm Beach

H.A. "HERKY" HUFFMAN
Enterprise

DAVID K. MEEHAN
St. Petersburg

KATHY BARCO
Jacksonville

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Tampa

BRIAN S. YABLONSKI
Tallahassee

KENNETH D. HADDAD, Executive Director
VICTOR J. HELLER, Assistant Executive Director

MARY ANN POOLE, DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF POLICY AND STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION
(850) 488-6661 TDD (850) 488-5542
FAX (850) 922-5679

December 20, 2005

RECEIVED

DEC 22 2005

OIP / OLOA

Ms. Lauren Milligan, Clearinghouse Coordinator
Florida State Clearinghouse
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, Mail Station 47
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

Re: SAI #FL200511211670C, Department
of the Air Force - Draft Environmental
Assessment - Range Road 218 Bypass
Road, Eglin Air Force Base, Walton
County

Dear Ms. Milligan:

The Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, Terrestrial Habitat Conservation and Restoration Section, of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has coordinated agency review of the Department of the Air Force - Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) - Range Road 218 Bypass Road at TA D-51 project, and provides the following comments and recommendations in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida Coastal Management Program and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Project Description

The Proposed Action is to construct a paved, two-lane bypass of Range Road (RR) 218 at Test Area (TA) D-51. Requisite security checkpoints at entrances to TA D-51 now result in travel time delays for Department of the Air Force personnel, contractors, and recreational patrons. The purpose of the bypass is to expedite and permit unencumbered traffic flow. The bypass would measure 2.3 miles in length, paralleling the northern boundary fence of TA D-51, along an existing unimproved road and would lie entirely within Eglin Air Force Base (Eglin AFB). Construction would directly impact 18 acres of land and result in fill of approximately 0.5 acres of wetlands.

Alternative Action A, the preferred action, follows the same alignment as the Proposed Action, except that a 1000-foot segment near Smith Branch would be diverted south approximately 200 feet toward Range Road 218. Alternative Action B would reroute traffic along existing roadways (State Road 285, RRs 200 and 219) and thus not require new construction. The No Action Alternative would similarly obviate the need for new construction.

620 South Meridian Street • Tallahassee • FL • 32399-1600
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Ms. Lauren Milligan
December 22, 2005
Page 2

Potentially Affected Resources

Query of the Environmental Resource Analysis database indicated that potential habitat for the following state-listed species (Chapter 68A-27, Florida Administrative Code, Rules Relating to Endangered or Threatened Species) occurs within 1000 feet of the preferred alternative (Alternative Action A): Okaloosa darter (*Etheostoma okaloosae*, Endangered), red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*, Threatened), Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*, Threatened), eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*, Threatened), gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*, Species of Special Concern), gopher frog (*Rana areolata*, Species of Special Concern), and flatwoods salamander (*Ambystoma cingulatum*, Species of Special Concern).

The alignment of the proposed action lies within 200 feet of a steephead slope that forms the source of Smith Branch. The stream is a tributary of Long Creek known to harbor Okaloosa darters (Bruce Hagedorn, Eglin AFB Natural Resources – personal communication). The Okaloosa darter is endemic to small to moderate streams within the Choctawhatchee Bay system. Its current range is limited to six tributary systems in Okaloosa and Walton counties. Ninety-four percent of the drainage area of these streams is on Eglin Air Force Base (Jelks and Alam 1981). The biggest threat to Okaloosa darters is habitat degradation, through erosion and sedimentation which deteriorate water quality of streams (Hoeft 1998).

The preferred alternative includes a setback of 200 feet along a 1000-foot segment in the vicinity of Smith Branch. The setback is intended to avert erosion and resultant sedimentation into darter habitat in accordance with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's guidelines. If adopted, this alternative would have no significant impact on Okaloosa darters or their habitat.

Alignments of the proposed action and preferred alternative traverse vegetation communities that were historically occupied by sandhill associates (e.g., longleaf pine and wiry graminoids), but which have been invaded by Choctawhatchee sand pine. Physiognomy of encroaching sand pines renders the site and environs poorly suited for the above-listed species. For example, the nearest recorded cluster of cavity trees for red-cockaded woodpeckers (RCWs) is located several miles from alignments of the proposed action or preferred alternative and well outside of foraging areas (Bruce Hagedorn-personal communication).

Concerns and Recommendations

We recommend that a systematic survey for gopher tortoises be conducted in the immediate footprint of the preferred alignment before land clearing and construction occur. If any gopher tortoises or burrows are found, we recommend the tortoises be relocated out of the area per FWC permit #WR05399.

Should other listed species be encountered prior to or during construction or if the project is expected to disturb, harm, result in capture, or take of state-listed species, their nests, or eggs, the applicant should visit <http://myfwc.com/permits/Protected-Wildlife/> for information on permit application requirements, and contact the Wildlife Permit Coordinator within the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation with specific permitting questions.

Ms. Lauren Milligan
December 22, 2005
Page 3


For species listed prior to 1999: If the species is currently classified as "Endangered" permits being can only be issued when the permitted activity will clearly enhance the survival potential of the species. Species that are classified as "Threatened" may have permits being issued only for scientific or conservation purposes and only upon a showing by the applicant that the permitted activity will not have a negative impact on the survival potential of the species. Species that are classified as "Species of Special Concern" may have permits being issued upon reasonable conclusion that the permitted activity will not be detrimental to the survival potential of the species. Additional information can be found in Chapter 68A-27, Florida Administrative Code (FAC).

For species listed after 1999 (which will be listed in sections 68A-27.003, .004, .005, FAC, following the list of pre-1999 species), species-specific rules as reflected in the rule will need to be followed.

Summary

The Draft Final Environmental Assessment is determined to be consistent with our authorities (Chapters 370 and 372, Florida Statutes) under the Florida Coastal Management Program. The preferred alternative (Alternative Action A), as detailed in the EA, is not expected to significantly impact state-listed species. If you or your staff would like to coordinate further on the recommendations contained in this report, please contact me at 850-488-6661 or email me at maryann.poole@MyFWC.com, and I will be glad to help make the necessary arrangements. If your staff has any specific questions regarding our comments, I encourage them to contact Mr Billy Sermons at our office in Panama City (850-265-3677; email billy.sermons@myfwc.com).

Sincerely,



Mary Ann Poole, Director
Office of Policy and Stakeholder Coord.

map/tsh/km
ENV 1-3-2

Cc: Gail Carmody, USFWS-Panama City
Dan Nichols, Eglin AFB Stewardship Branch

Referenced Literature

- Hoehn, T. 1998. Rare and Imperiled Species of Florida: A Watershed Perspective. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
- Jelks, H. and S. Alam. 1981. Recovery Plan for Okaloosa Darter (*Etheostoma okaloosae*). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

COUNTY: WALTON
SCH-USAf-EG
2005-12221

DATE: 11/18/2005
COMMENTS DUE DATE: 12/22/2005
CLEARANCE DUE DATE: 1/10/2006
SAI#: FL200511211670C

MESSAGE:

STATE AGENCIES	WATER MNGMNT. DISTRICTS	OPB POLICY UNIT	RPCS & LOC GOVS
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS			
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD		
FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STATE			

The attached document requires a Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida Coastal Management Program consistency evaluation and is categorized as one of the following:

- ☐ Federal Assistance to State or Local Government (15 CFR 930, Subpart F). Agencies are required to evaluate the consistency of the activity.
- ☒ Direct Federal Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart C). Federal Agencies are required to furnish a consistency determination for the State's concurrence or objection.
- ☐ Outer Continental Shelf Exploration, Development or Production Activities (15 CFR 930, Subpart E). Operators are required to provide a consistency certification for state concurrence/objection.
- ☐ Federal Licensing or Permitting Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart D). Such projects will only be evaluated for consistency when there is not an analogous state license or permit.

Project Description:

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, CONSTRUCT RANGE ROAD 218 BYPASS ROAD AT TEST AREA D-51, EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE - WALTON COUNTY, FLORIDA.

To: Florida State Clearinghouse

AGENCY CONTACT AND COORDINATOR (SCH)
3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000
TELEPHONE: (850) 245-2161
FAX: (850) 245-2190

EO. 12372/NEPA Federal Consistency

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Comment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Comment/Consistent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comment Attached | <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent/Comments Attached |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable | <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent/Comments Attached |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable |

From:

Division of Historical Resources
Division/Bureau: Bureau of Historic Preservation

Reviewer: *S. Edwards*

Date: 12-13-05

Laura A. Kammiller, Deputy SHPO
12-13-2005

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DEC 19 2005

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